

POLAND'S PRIVATIZATION PAINS

June 10 - 23, 1996

IN THESE TIMES

ABSOLUTE YELTSIN

THE RUSSIAN
PRESIDENT'S
ELECTION-YEAR
POWER GRAB
DASHES HOPES FOR
DEMOCRATIC

REFORM

FRED WEIR
REPORTS



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EDITORIAL

PUBLICIZING LEFT INTELLECTUALS

The vast majority of Americans could not help but regard the brouhaha raised by Alan Sokal's hoax article, which appeared in the current issue of the intentionally obscure journal *Social Text*, as a tempest in a teacup. Incomprehensible and irrelevant even to many academics, *Social Text* was all too easily victimized by Sokal's regurgitation of the journal's own cherished rhetoric. (See "Textual reckoning," May 27.) Few people read, and fewer understand, the journal's private language, but Sokal's hoax nevertheless received front-page attention in the *New York Times*, followed by an op-ed piece in which Duke professor Stanley Fish, a devout postmodernist and executive director of Duke University Press, *Social Text's* publisher, decried Sokal's bad manners, without explaining how his obvious spoof had sailed effortlessly into print.

But why, you may ask, are journals like *Social Text*—devoted to obscure verbiage, pretentious displays of esoteric learning and academic one-upsmanship—important to us? The answer is because the poststructuralists who gather around journals like *Social Text* lay claim to being, and are perceived by many to be, the avant-garde of the left in American intellectual life.

Indeed, they think of themselves as being on the left, and they have left antecedents. Just as Bolshevism had its roots in Marxian socialism, so did poststructuralism have its source in the New Left of the '60s. Furthermore, the core idea from which much of their rhetoric flows is taken from the pre-1917 Marxist understanding that beliefs and intellectual constructs, as well as social attitudes and institutions, are historically determined and can be understood and evaluated only in the context of the times and social conditions in which they develop.

This, indeed, is how Russell Jacoby, in *The Last Intellectuals*, seeks to understand poststructuralism itself. He argues that the rapid growth of American colleges and universities in the decades following World War II, in itself a positive development, fortuitously provided a haven for

thousands of disoriented young radicals looking for careers as the New Left disintegrated in the late '60s. In this new home, bereft of a public constituency, these academic leftists have increasingly become an unoffending part of their profession, and their relation to American society has come increasingly to resemble that of cloistered monks and nuns speaking and writing to themselves in Latin. Thus, contrary to conservative howls about Marxist subversion of the universities, these academics have pursued studies that threaten nothing but the possibility of the revival of an intellectually vigorous left.

True, "Marxist" and "radical" caucuses have proliferated in various disciplines. But all too often what they produce is incomprehensible to anyone not conversant in current academic fads. In place of the interaction with a

general public that earlier generations of left intellectuals sought, these new radicals pursue only their private careers and academic honors.

This baneful development is, however, not entirely the fault of its practitioners. Traditionally, American public intellectuals—people such as Thorstein Veblen, Lewis Mumford, Edmund Wilson, Daniel Bell, C. Wright Mills, Michael Harrington—have emerged from vigorous social movements that had a need and a use for their ideas. The current crop of intellectuals, on the other hand, is the product of the collapse and

retreat of a generalized left in the United States. This required a circling of the wagons on campus, and in that context their retreat into impenetrable cocoons is understandable.

But times are changing. The era of left retreat is coming to an end. And in that context, Sokal's "prank," as the defenders of the poststructuralist domain choose to call it, may be seen as a straw in the wind.

Post-structuralists have threatened nothing but the possibility of a revived, intellectually vigorous left.

We hope it is. After years of ascendancy, the right in this country is in disarray and slipping, and there are signs of life on the left. For too long, the general left has clung to old ideas and solutions, while avoiding or disparaging intellectual rigor and the clear expression of new ideas. But if a new left is to emerge as something more than a feckless sideshow, it will need all the help it can get. So it's time for left academics to stop talking to themselves and start thinking about the needs of the world outside their elite enclaves. ◀

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LETTERS

Stereotyping Carey

As a Teamster member involved in the long fight to make our union stronger and free of corruption, I was struck by how the exchange of letters in your April 29 issue missed the point.

Since winning an upset election victory in 1991, Ron Carey has been trying to turn the Teamsters into a fighting force that works with environmentalists, women's organizations and other community groups to stand up to corporate greed. He is also working to erase the legacy of corruption left behind by Jimmy Hoffa and his successors. It's only natural that the Mob, employers and some union officials who got fat off the old system will do anything to smear Carey, playing off the stereotype that every Teamster leader must be corrupt.

After representatives of old guard

officials and former followers of Lyndon Larouche took a long list of charges against him to a court-appointed panel headed by former FBI head William Webster, Carey sent a copy of the panel's 85-page report to every local union to make available to the membership. Talk about full disclosure!

The statement in Richard Behar's letter that the panel's report criticized Carey "for dishonesty in his real estate dealings" is an outright lie. In 85 pages—covering dozens of charges—the only real criticism of Carey was that he signed his wife's signature (with her permission) to a real estate document. It is one heck of a deliberate stretch to call that "dishonesty in his real estate dealings."

Gerald Zero

Secretary-Treasurer,
Teamsters Local 705
Chicago

Fatal flaw

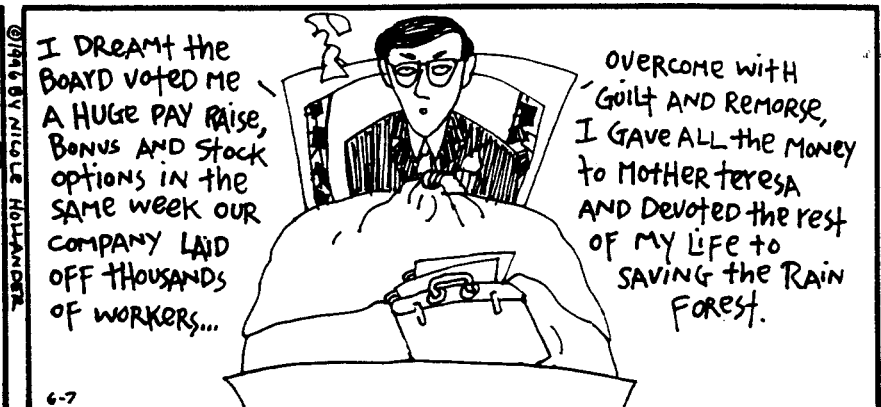
How can progressives like those who signed the "Balance this" letter (May 13) fail to mention the military budget as one of the strongest pieces of evidence for the phoniness of the balanced budget movement? They fail to show the source of the current national deficit—the huge increases in military spending and tax cuts during the Reagan years. Instead, they pretty up this period by focusing on economic growth created through increased deficit spending.

Presidents Reagan and Bush together account for 73 percent of the present national debt. Their combined deficit spending surpassed the total of their 39 predecessors. And what exactly accounted for this deficit? Tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy provided the base for trickle-down economics, which of course did not translate into security for the average American. Because of these cuts, corporations today account for less than 10 percent of federal revenues, whereas in 1943 corporate taxes provided our government with 40 percent of its money. These tax cuts for the privileged were then balanced on the backs of individual taxpayers.

The arms race that drove military policy during the Reagan-Bush years also dominated federal spending. The "peace dividend," which was supposed to transfer Cold War funds into domestic programs, never materialized, and now we are paying off the Cold War

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



with a reduction in human services.

Half of our federal discretionary budget, excluding interest on the debt, is spent on so-called defense programs. We may hear a battle cry of "balance the budget now" from Congress while it attempts to decide the fate of AFDC or Medicare, but for some mysterious reason the Pentagon received \$7 billion more in FY 1996 than was requested. What is even more appalling amid this current debate on the deficit is the fact that the House National Security Committee just recommended a \$13 billion increase for weapons in next year's budget. This is more than twice the EPA's annual budget! This points out who actually benefited from the "growth" of the '80s.

These facts are not mentioned in "Balance this," nor is the current legislation attacked for its blatant hypocrisy. No good will come of a deficit created to further privilege the wealthy and powerful, so let us focus spending on programs that will benefit us all: education, the environment, health care, mass transit, housing, job training and income assistance. We should be spending for a more peaceful and just nation for our workers, children and communities, not making excuses for our government's misplaced priorities.

Bernice R. Bild
Executive Director,
Coalition for New Priorities
Chicago

TV animals

I agree with the main points of Will Nixon's May 13 article, "The trouble with television." But I disagree with his assertion that nature documentaries are nothing more than animal soap operas. Watching wildlife on film provides insights into the way ecosystems function. These insights can not be acquired solely by reading. Words, for instance, can't convey all the subtle and complex interactions between the animals of an African

savanna. Humans despise laziness, cowardice, thievery and sneakiness, and yet when these qualities are demonstrated by leopards, they invoke awe and admiration. You have to see it to believe it.

The reason that wondrous nature shows produce mediocre environmentalism is because the message is always the same: People don't belong in these places. Even the relatively harmless Pygmies and Yanomani seem incongruous with everything around them. Wilderness doesn't require more entrepreneurs, tourists, biologists or

anything else. We humans are reluctant to admit that we belong to a plague species, so we avoid confronting the real problem.

Tom Brown
Frankston, Texas

Lay off Brigitte!

I am incensed at David Futrelle's ignorant, worthless attack on Brigitte Bardot's animal activism. Obviously, Futrelle didn't actually do any research to uncover anything substantive about her "neo-Nazi" husband, so he takes cheap shots at someone trying to do good.

Let me ask Futrelle something: What have you yourself done in the last year for anyone or anything?

Terri Mitchell
Los Angeles

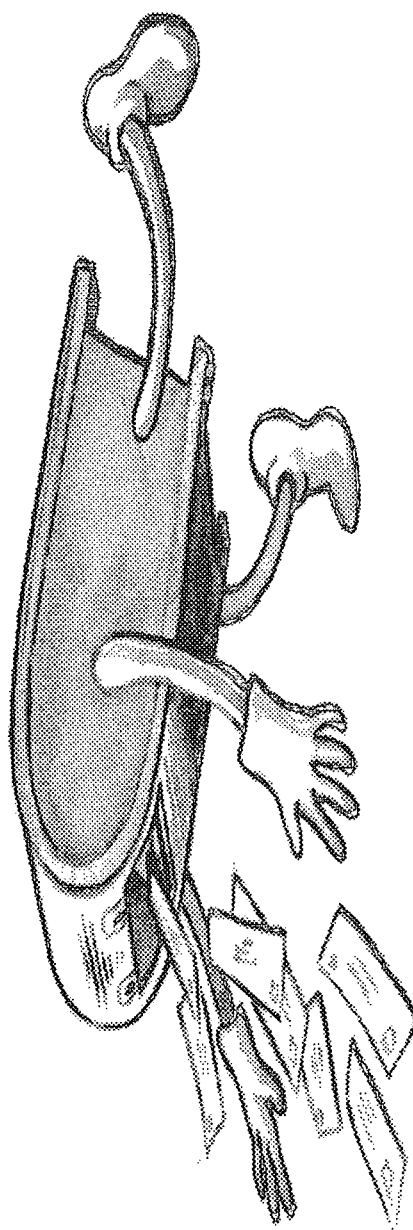
Stop Carping!

I have been living in Europe for the last 11 years; throughout this time I've had a subscription to In These Times. I read it to keep informed about what is going on in the United States and about left-wing trends. The casting of poison-pen letters between Messrs. Serrin, Behar, Sleeper, Ledbetter and Barrett is of little or no interest to me. I am also appalled by the petty tone that oozes out of these letters.

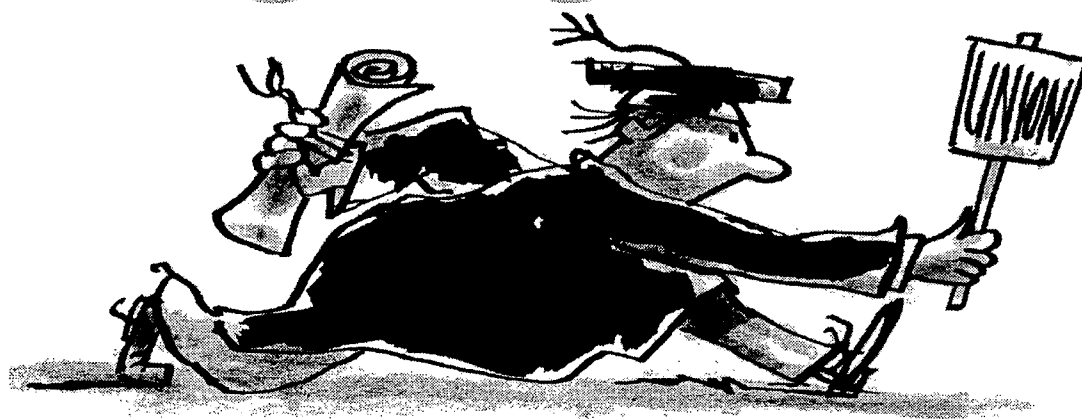
The left's problem has always been one of pettiness and internal firefights. They are useless, non-productive and quickly forgotten. The left should be seeking a common ground to build a foundation that can carry different strains of like-thinking people.

I also notice that Linda DeLibero is incredibly bitter over everything she writes about, and find myself sorely missing the days of Diana Johnstone and John Judis.

Jeff Brown
Århus, Denmark



InSHORT



Locals 34 and 35 of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees, which represent 4,000 clerical and maintenance workers at Yale, spent most of the past semester on strike after the university refused to budge on its demands for the unlimited subcontracting of all new maintenance and dining-hall jobs, as well as major pension cutbacks for retired clerical employees. The two unions have returned to work for the summer, but promise to go out again in September if no agreement is reached.

In a gesture signalling its renewed commitment to workplace militancy and organizing, the AFL-CIO devoted four full-time staffers to organize the rally, which it billed as a

"People's Graduation" to coincide with Yale's commencement ceremonies. Trumka and Jesse Jackson gave the day's keynote addresses after a long march that circled the ivy-covered enclave where the commencement ceremonies were being held. The university tried, and failed, to convince the city to revoke permits for the march and the gathering. Yale administrators' fears were not unjustified: In a spirited speech peppered with calls for militancy and class solidarity,

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FAMILY REUNION

Setting in high relief his federation's commitment to more militant, class-based politics, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka invaded the hallowed precincts of Yale University on May 27 to kick off the AFL-CIO's "Union Summer." Union Summer, modeled on the civil rights movement's Freedom Summer of 1964, will place thousands of

young people, many of them from union families, in voter registration drives and workplace organizing efforts, all with a clear eye toward November's elections. Nearly 8,000 workers from around the country flooded into New Haven, Conn., to take part in a rally designed to focus national attention on the ongoing labor strife at Yale.

Reed's Dungheap

THE COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL POLICY (CNP), AN EXCLUSIVE association of leaders from the religious and far right, met in Orlando, Fla., in March. (See "The First Stone," August 8, 1994.) Though the meetings of the CNP are highly secret, undercover reporters from C.C. Watch, an electronic news service that tracks the Christian right, managed to eavesdrop on a few conversations. A number of Republican candidates, including Delaware Senate hopeful Ray Clatworthy, attended the confab in hopes of drumming up support for their campaigns. At one point during the conference Clatworthy was introduced to the Christian Coalition's Ralph Reed. C.C. Watch quotes Reed confiding to the aspiring candidate: "I know you met

with Pat. We're looking forward to helping you." Clatworthy went on to suggest that since Delaware is such a small state, the Christian Coalition and its allies in the conservative Catholic Alliance make his race a "pilot" project for a new kind of smear campaign in which Reed's legions attack candidates—in this case Clatworthy's opponent, Sen. Joseph Biden—as "non-practicing Catholics." Reed reportedly responded, "Let's try it!"—adding that he would discuss the matter with Catholic Alliance director Maureen Roselli. "I'll do anything I can to help you," Reed told Clatworthy as he left the Buena Vista Palace Hotel. Appearing later that day on CBS's *Face the Nation*, however, Reed explained to Bob Schieffer, "As you know, Bob, the Christian Coalition does not endorse candidates or disendorse candidates." —Joel Bleifuss

PPALL-O-METER

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Looking for clues 8.5

OJ. Simpson's promised hunt for the "real killers" of his ex-wife and Ronald Goldman long ago became a rather threadbare joke for late-night comedians. But what, one might wonder, has he actually done to fulfill his pledge? As reporters for the Copley News Service report, not too terribly much. "There is ... no evidence that Simpson has made even a token effort to pursue the so-called real slayers," they write. "Legally, he's stonewalled attorneys who grilled him about the topic for the wrongful death lawsuit. Numerous witnesses, including his son Jason and friend Al Cowlings, testified in depositions they knew of nothing Simpson had done to snare anyone." Meanwhile, Simpson and his supporters continue to give out, well, contradictory messages. Though Simpson himself has suggested that he can no longer afford to pay detectives allegedly tracking down leads in the case, "the private eye who claims to be in charge of

the real-killer probe" told Copley News Service reporters "that Simpson was bankrolling an active investigation that was 'zeroing in on our target.'" Stay tuned!



Looking for clues, Part Two 8.5

Meanwhile, in Chicago, a similar search for the "real killer" has returned to square one. Police recently arrested Richard P. Milam for the 1994 murder of his wife—after a co-worker told them Milam had originally recruited him to do the

dirty deed. At the time of the murder, Milam told police that "a black man hid in his van, killed his wife and wounded him," the *Chicago Sun-Times* reports. But investigators never quite believed the story, noting that Milam had a \$200,000 insurance policy for his wife, and that he filed a claim shortly after the murder. As the paper notes, the investigators' "suspicion built over 28 months as Milam never asked how the probe was going ... while Tammy Milam's family called regularly."

Hymen town 7.5

Chinese officials seem to have been struck by a similar case of nostalgia. Hospitals in the Chinese city of Wuhan are now fining non-virgin women who come in for government-mandated pre-marital checkups, UPI reports. The fines are hefty, by Chinese standards—up to \$240—and the women discovered with damaged hymens are also forced to write "self-criticism" of their unchaste ways. According to Zhang Xianwu, the director of the city's marriage department, the policy is an attempt to fight the "immoral practices" that have entered China from the wicked outside world.

wealth—an endowment of nearly \$5 billion, which earns a million dollars a day in interest—has given such posturing the lie. As Jackson put it, "This is not about money, it's about arrogance and the crushing of spirits."

The strike also provides a useful test for the AFL-CIO's aggressive new organizing strategy. Locals 34 and 35 offer a model of solidarity across lines of race, gender and occupation. A majority of Local 35 workers are black or Latino, while women make up 85 percent of Local 34's workforce. The locals have fashioned a class-based solidarity that makes them among the more militant unions in the country.

The Yale locals are, to be sure, still without a contract. But if May 27 is any indication, American unions are ready to carry their struggle to corporate America's most treasured institutions. Even as the future "leaders of America" received their degrees, it was Trumka's words you could hear throughout Yale: "This is our university, our country, and it is time to take it back."

—James Surowiecki

SAN FRANCISCO'S MEAN STREETS

During the 1995 campaign for San Francisco mayor, the great dividing line between the final two candidates was their diametrically opposed positions on the homeless.

Then-Mayor Frank Jordan, who won the 1991 mayoral election by promising to crack down on aggressive panhandling, vowed to continue his nationally known Matrix program. Founded in 1993, Matrix concentrated police resources on citing or arresting homeless people for obstructing sidewalks, camping or sleeping in public places and panhandling. Other cities, such as Austin, Texas, looked to San Francisco's program as a model for dealing with the homeless problem.

Jordan's mayoral opponent, then-Assemblyman Willie Brown Jr., vowed to end Matrix. Brown promised to implement a "humanis-

Trumka bitterly attacked Yale for "descending into the swampland where corporate monstrosities like Caterpillar, AT&T and Burger King live and breathe."

In a somewhat digressive speech, Jackson linked the fight to overcome racial divisions with efforts to push the Democratic Party to the left (though he did seem to suggest he would support Bill Clinton in November). Both Jackson and Trumka highlighted the

similarities between the struggle of workers at Yale and those of workers across the country, and both insisted that a victory at Yale was a necessary step toward future victories, both in the workplace and at the polls.

Labor leaders have paid particular attention to the Yale strike for two reasons. First, while the university has engaged in the poor-mouthing typical of corporations engaged in downsizing and outsourcing, its enormous

tic" approach, one in which officials would go out and on a "one-to-one basis spend as much time as necessary talking to a homeless individual and find out where they can connect that homeless person with the services."

After winning the runoff election against Jordan in January, Brown grandly announced "Matrix is dead." But in the same breath, he said he expected police to enforce all of the city's laws, including those used under Matrix. This rhetorical hedge has resulted in the continuation of Matrix. In fact, the number of "quality of life" citations issued in San Francisco has actually increased during the first four months of 1996 as compared to 1995, according to research by the San Francisco-based Coalition on Homelessness.

Critics maintain that Brown has caved in to a hard political reality: San

Francisco receives \$5 billion a year from the tourist trade, and the No. 1 registered complaint by tourists is the presence of the homeless population. Nonetheless, they are not letting the new mayor off the hook. "The Matrix mentality has become standard operating procedure on the part of the police department," says Judy Appel, a lawyer with the Coalition on Homelessness. "We need an affirmative policy."

So far, Brown's most concrete proposal is a summit on the homeless issue sometime in the fall. Part of the problem, say homeless advocates, is that Brown has chosen as his homeless coordinator a campaign volunteer who has limited experience crafting homeless policy. In addition, the deputy police chief who oversaw implementing Matrix is now in charge of overseeing the Brown administration's less-confrontational administrative philoso-

phy on homelessness—a switch, say homeless advocates, that is difficult for officers to make.

In an odd twist, the politician who is most active in defining a new approach to dealing with the homeless is a prosecutor—San Francisco District Attorney Terence Hallinan, a former criminal defense attorney and liberal politician. In April, Hallinan—who himself was engaged in a quality of life offense when he punched a prominent developer in a public restaurant for criticizing some of his policies—filed a motion to dismiss 39,000 citations and warrants issued under the main Matrix code sections between 1993 and 1996.

Then in May, Hallinan appeared in court on behalf of an activist with the organization Food Not Bombs, which serves free soup and bagels to the homeless near City Hall. Hallinan asked the judge to drop a 60-day jail sentence, stating that if the activist had been arrested under Hallinan's watch, his office would not have filed the case.

Yet despite such hopeful signs, homeless advocates are preparing for the worst. "We have seen a lot of talk and no action," says Appel. "As far as law enforcement, there's every indication everything's going to stay the same or get worse because now the police are at full staff."

And that fact is especially disheartening, say advocates, because many other cities followed San Francisco's get-tough approach on the issue of homelessness. If Matrix continues in San Francisco, the advocates say, there is less incentive for these cities to reassess their own programs.

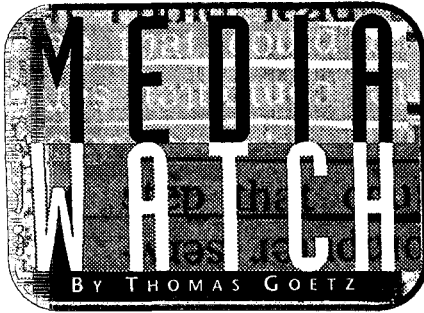
—Nina Schuyler

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Ozone, schmozone

FUTURE EARTH: THE JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURAL ABUNDANCE IS COMMITTED TO THE FINANCIAL WELL-BEING OF THE petrochemical industry, especially pesticide manufacturers. In its ongoing effort to promote "chemical tools and plant foods" the journal wages an all-out public relations offensive against environmentalists. For example, the current issue of *Future Earth* highlights the wisdom of Tim Ross, a self-described "certified professional meteorologist" with 15 years' experience. Ross, the weatherman for KRNW-TV in Reno, Nev., warns about the "hyper-environmentalists and their cheerleaders" who are "scarin' the bejiggers out of all of us" with their "foreboding reports of an ominous 'hole in the ozone.'" Ross writes, "If there really is a hole in the ozone, maybe it has been there for a gajillion years. Maybe we need a hole in the ozone. ... Perhaps Mom Nature designed a hole in the ozone layer to allow excess accumulations of the stuff to escape when necessary." —J.B.



Bottom feeding

Wondering where the GOP got its battle plans to fight an increased minimum wage? The answer's right between the Oasis and Nine Inch Nails videos on MTV. At a meeting of House GOP leaders last month, Rep. John Boehner (R-OH) presented an MTV News segment on the minimum wage as a model of how Republicans might argue against the increase. It seems the video channel did such a good job arguing the GOP position that Newt Gingrich's inner circle took notes. MTV's bold insight: Democrats aren't really concerned about jobs—they're just playing politics to deflate the Republican revolution.

Not that MTV's latent conservative streak is so surprising—the channel almost single-handedly created the concept of rebellion-through-conformity. But its laissez-faire attitude toward politics seems a direct contradiction of their much-hyped Choose or Lose drive. Recently dissected by *The New Republic's* Michael Lewis, Choose or Lose is MTV's answer to adolescent apathy, spurring voter registration drives coast to coast.

Lewis' article, mind you, was itself an exercise in the obvious: Surprise! MTV can be superficial! The highlight was seeing how Lewis stepped lightly over his budding romance with MTV talking head and Arafat inquisitor Tabitha Soren. No praise for her "perfectly shaped bottom," as he lavished on his now-estranged wife, a Bloomingdale's model, in *TNR* a couple years ago. But he did slip her an underhanded and undeserved compliment, calling MTV's political interviews "among the most interesting

around, unconfined by the constipated conventions of most political coverage." Hmm, first "bottom" and now "constipated."

Plastic payola

With so much attention being paid these days to the growth of media monoliths and their saccharine synergies, it's easy to forget that supposedly autonomous media companies can be just as eager to buy into the madness. Witness, for instance, Wenner Media's proud announcement late last month that it was introducing a *Rolling Stone* Visa card. Wenner Media, owned by *RS* founder Jann Wenner, has always positioned itself as a willfully independent publisher. Struggling to fend off *Spin* magazine's nibbling of *RS* readership, the company hopes the credit card will tie down customer loyalty. "Our readers have an extremely high affinity for the magazine," said one

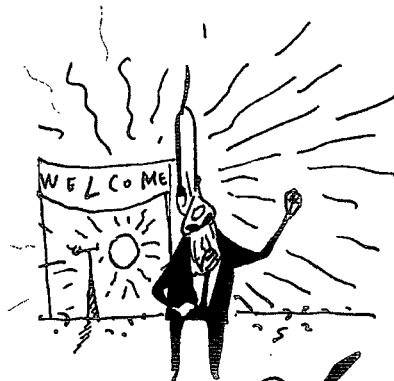
Wenner Media VP, "and by offering the cachet of *Rolling Stone* along with the numerous benefits and special discounts, we feel confident that the card will be a success."

There's nothing particularly unusual behind this PR spiel—plenty of magazines, including *In These Times*, have tried similar gambits. But *RS* goes a step further—and a step closer to breaching that ephemeral wall separating journalism and marketing: a *RS* Visa cardholder not only gets to earn points in a rewards program, but also gets special discounts from Columbia Records (owned by Sony) and Time Life Music (owned by Time Warner, which also owns the Warner Bros., Elektra and Atlantic Music Groups). Doesn't *Rolling Stone* review dozens of records put out by these labels? And if *Rolling Stone* gets a cut from each purchase on the card, isn't it in Wenner Media's interest to get them to buy, buy, buy?

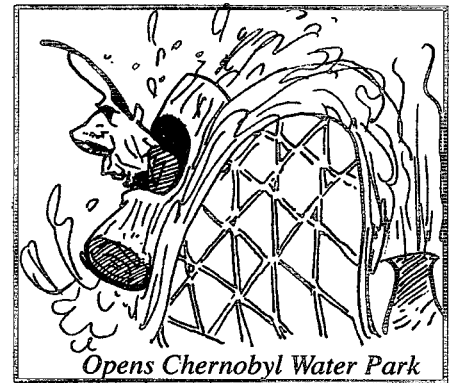
TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

By Steve Brodner

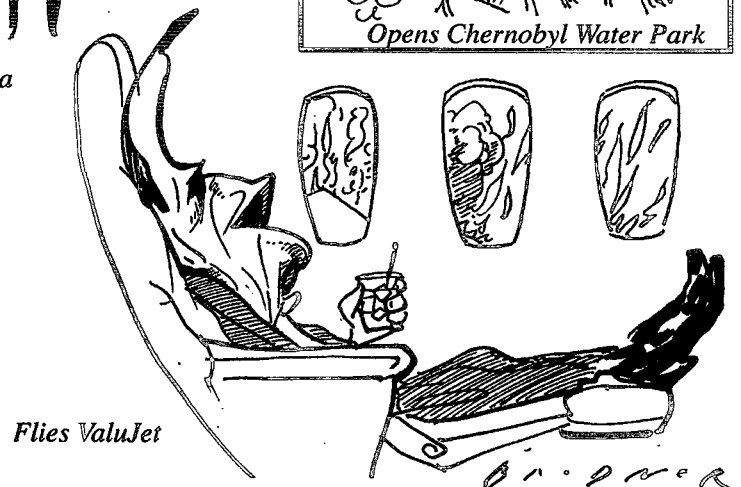
Bob "trust in the hard way" Dole gets pumped



Hosts
Oklahoma
Harvest
Fest



Opens Chernobyl Water Park



Flies ValuJet

BRODNER

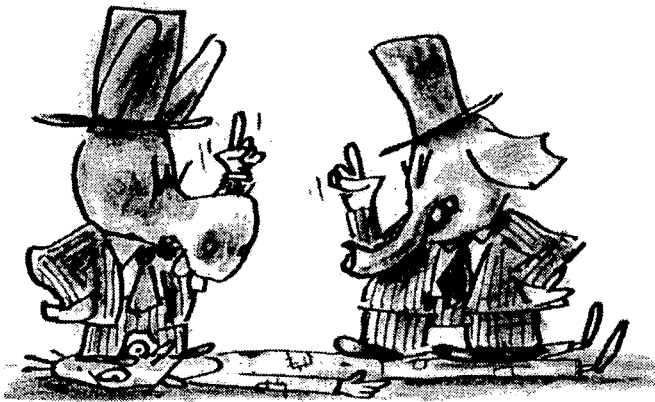
DEFORMING WELFARE

Welfare is emerging as a central issue of the presidential campaign, with Bill Clinton and Bob Dole tripping over each other in recent weeks to prove their credentials as reformers. Yet despite their superficial differences, Clinton and Dole are offering voters few real choices on the issue. Both candidates endorse an agenda that would push more people into poverty, lower the wages of already poor workers and raise the costs for taxpayers, who would be asked to cover the massive and unpredictable expenses of cutting the social safety net for millions of families.

The welfare debate has been deadlocked since last fall, when Clinton vetoed a GOP reform bill—but only after government data showed the legislation would catapult more than a million children into poverty. In recent months Republicans have wavered between legislation that would have bipartisan support and legislation that Clinton would probably veto but that would give the GOP a ready campaign issue. For their part, the Democrats' strategy, or non-strategy, seems to be to jump on the bandwagon and hope it gets stuck in mud.

Anticipating a Republican attack on welfare, Clinton launched a pre-emptive strike on May 18, when in his weekly radio address he endorsed Wisconsin's "W-2" (for Wisconsin Works)

welfare reform legislation. The program—brainchild of Gov. Tommy Thompson, a potential GOP vice-presidential candidate—would require virtually all welfare recipients to work and would place a lifetime limit of five years on support. (See "Wageless in Wisconsin," May 27.) Clinton called W-2—the most stringent welfare reform package in the country—bold



and encouraging. He all but promised to grant the federal waivers necessary for its plan to abolish the state's Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and to end entitlements. And he said that if legislation came across his desk that, like W-2, put a time limit on benefits and required welfare recipients to work, he would sign it.

Clinton's favorable response to W-2 may come back to haunt him if his administration decides to withhold approval for any of the numerous provisions of W-2 that run contrary to federal law. But for the moment, it has sent Republicans scrambling. On a campaign trip to Wisconsin later in the week, Bob Dole was reduced to calling Clinton's endorsement "calculated cyn-

icism" and trying to one-up him by calling for mandatory drug-testing of welfare recipients. In the meantime, Republicans introduced another welfare reform plan—one that would limit cash benefits to a maximum of five years and require all adults to work after two years.

The odds are Clinton will maintain his welfare reform credentials by continuing to grant liberal waivers for state experiments—including W-2. This is high election-year drama. But for mothers forced to leave children as young as 12 weeks old (as they are under the Wisconsin plan), for workers channeled into subminimum-wage jobs or simply kicked off the roles, for children left in inadequate day care, and for battered

women who suddenly find themselves without a safety net, the game is deadly serious.

Even as Daniel Patrick Moynihan happily announces what he considers to be "an agreeable impasse" in Congress, more families will fall into poverty, more children will suffer horribly, and the debate will grow ever more muddled and confused. The problem is not welfare, the problem is poverty. And all the electioneering in the world won't change this.

—Katherine Sciacchitano

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51 years after

AS OF MAY 1, GERMANY BECAME THE FIRST COUNTRY to open a military base on United States soil. The German Luftwaffe was granted permission to establish a facility at Holloman Air Force Base north of El Paso, N.M. Germany needed a base, away from a populated area, from which to train its pilots in how to fly Europe's new "Tornado" fighter aircraft. —JB

UMW's FEMALE TROUBLES

A recent sex-discrimination lawsuit raises serious questions for the United Mine Workers of America (UMW) and for Richard Trumka, the former UMW president. Trumka is now secretary-general of the AFL-CIO, which has pledged to bring more women and people of color into the

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labor movement.

A six-woman, two-man District of Columbia Superior Court jury last month ruled that the UMW had discriminated against former staff member Marat Moore when it dismissed her in 1994. The panel awarded Moore \$300,000 in compensatory damages and \$150,000 in punitive damages.

The union plans to appeal. UMW spokeswoman Eileen Goldsmith insists that Moore was "discharged for cause" and that "the union doesn't tolerate discrimination on any grounds." Brad Burton, now Trumka's top assistant at the federation, was the one who recommended that Moore be fired.

Moore maintains she served faithfully and well during her eight-year tenure at the UMW headquarters in Washington. She started out as a union miner in Mingo County, W.Va., in 1979. She later helped organize the Pittston coal strike in 1989 and 1990, concentrating especially on mobilizing women. In recent years, Moore had won praise as associate editor of the *UMWA Journal*.

All along, Moore maintained close ties with coal-mining women, who have occasionally had tensions with the union leadership. For years Moore worked with the Coal Employment Project (CEP), an independent non-profit organization that works on behalf of women miners. At the time of her firing, she was on CEP's board of directors.

Officials originally told Moore she was being fired for financial reasons. But during the trial they cited another cause: Moore, they argued, had used poor judgment in handling a controversy over CEP's booking a convention at an anti-union hotel. Moore, however, was not responsible for making the reservation, which CEP eventually canceled.

After her dismissal, Moore received a confidential memo in the mail, sent by an anonymous source. The memo was dated the day before her discharge and was addressed to Burton. It said that the union had found a candidate to replace Moore, and that the candidate was to be paid the same salary Moore had been making after eight

Questionable shelf life

FOR AN ANALYSIS OF BOB DOLE'S DECISION TO TRANSFORM HIMSELF FROM button-down Senate majority leader to khaki-casual candidate, NBC news sought out Jerry della Femina, the marketing wiz who created Joe Isuzu. "Robert Dole has to start to see himself as a product," said della Femina. "What he is saying is, 'Try the new, improved Bob Dole.' When Tylenol had its horrible problem, they did not announce that they were changing a few things. They said: new product, new packaging, new everything. Basically, Dole just said: 'I'm taking everything off the shelves. I'm starting over.'" —JB

years at the union.

Moore thinks the real reason she was fired was that the union has a low tolerance for outspoken women. The UMW, she points out, has an overwhelmingly male membership and very few women in higher-level staff jobs. "All along I felt there was a very narrow band of behavior that was considered acceptable for women in the union," she says. Moore maintains she was "in no way insubordinate. But

I was involved in women's issues and I made no bones about that."

Being "too outspoken" is a major job hazard for many union staffers. But the UMW has a reputation for demanding an especially strict loyalty from its staff; some sources charge that even internal staff dissent is sometimes stifled. Whether these traditions will continue under the leadership of new UMW President Cecil Roberts remains to be seen.

—Laura McClure

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



THE FIRST STONE

SLINGING SLUDGE

By Joel Bleifuss

A public relations campaign by the sludge industry has kept the real story behind the EPA's policy reversal on sewer sludge out of view. Environmental journalists, misled by the bad information put out by the industry's flacks, have been slow to tell the public how the EPA has reclassified sewer sludge, which was once a regulated waste, as an unregulated fertilizer.

An unknown number of reporters have been given a November 2, 1995 memo by Al Rubin, the EPA's senior sludge scientist. In that memo, Rubin claimed that my October 16, 1995 sludge story was based on statements that "are contrary to all available scientific evidence." (See "The First Stone," May 27, 1996.) For example, Rubin said my "allegations" that the EPA failed to analyze the impact of sludge contaminants on the water supply or wildlife were "false and without merit." He went on to claim that "in the [computerized] multimedia 14 pathway risk assessment ... both the groundwater and ecological pathways were thoroughly evaluated." This assessment, Rubin said, had "received extensive scientific peer review." That, at least, is true. A 1989 peer review, which was commissioned by the EPA, reported: "Computer models for risk assessment from sludge-applied pollutants are inadequate. Conceptualization is poor, and validation with field results is missing." Seven years later, the regulation is in place, and field results are still missing.

One journalist who was influenced by Rubin's memo, Murray Carpenter, wrote a sludge story for the *Maine Times*, the state's alternative weekly, in which he reported that "if improperly applied, sludge can lead to soil contamination, so it is monitored and regulated." He is wrong. The sludge now sold commercially as a fertilizer is neither monitored nor regulated. Carpenter compounded his error by reporting, as Rubin claimed in his memo, that public health is safeguarded by the EPA, which has "set limits for metals and other pollutants in land-applied sludge based on a risk assessment looking at 14 exposure pathways for 25 pollutants."

The sludge industry has also attempted to discredit John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton's recent, puckishly titled book, *Toxic Sludge Is Good for You*. For example, Stauber and Rampton accurately note that Milwaukee's sludge fertilizer, marketed under the name Milorganite, was banned in Maryland in 1982. However, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* environmental reporter Don Behm, in a review of the book, chided the authors for reporting this "inaccurate" information. The real error, it turns out, was Behm's, who apparently relied on misinformation provided by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, which markets Milorganite. In fact, an April 19, 1983 memo from a Milwaukee sewer district official reported that one distributor had supplied

Milorganite to a Maryland customer without being "aware of the Maryland ban," and had subsequently "agreed to no longer supply Maryland with Milorganite." Behm's mistake was picked up and passed on by Amy Gahrn, writing in the *SEJ* (Society of Environmental Journalists) *Journal*. In an otherwise favorable review of *Toxic Sludge Is Good for You*, Gahrn incorrectly wrote that Behm has "pointed out ... some factual inaccuracies" in the book and that "other inaccuracies may exist."

Other sludge critics have been treated more harshly. New York City sludge, which is among the most contaminated in the country, is too hazardous to be put on New York farmland. So, to rid itself of the problem, the city signed a \$168 million waste-disposal contract with the Long Island-based waste-disposal firm Merco Joint Ventures. Merco, having failed to get permission to dump the Big Apple's crap in Oklahoma, turned to Texas, where it received a dumping permit from the Texas Water Commission in a record-breaking 23 days. Now, New York sludge is being dumped at a rate of 225 tons a day on the countryside surrounding Sierra Blanca, a poor, largely Hispanic community.

Michael Moore, in the April 2, 1994 episode of *TV Nation*, lampooned this pathetic example of environmental racism. And, in an interview for the show, EPA whistleblower Hugh Kaufman characterized Merco's sludge disposal as an "illegal haul and dump operation masquerading as an environmentally beneficial project."

Merco sued. And on March 8, Kaufman was fined \$1 in compensatory damages and \$500,000 in punitive damages, while the show's producer, Sony's Tristar, was fined \$1 in compensatory damages and \$3.5 million in punitive damages.

But there is more to this story than meets the eye. As Louis Dubose reports in the *Texas Observer*, Merco apparently sued Kaufman because the whistleblower was part of an EPA-initiated grand jury investigation that is focusing on Merco's alleged Mob affiliations and Merco-connected payments to Texas politicians. Kaufman's lawyers contend that

by bringing suit, and thereby gaining discovery, Merco hoped to be able to find out what information Kaufman had uncovered. The judge presiding over the case prevented the jury from hearing any of this relevant information.

Yet whenever the public is informed about plans to dump sludge as fertilizer, opposition surfaces.

Earlier this year in Colorado, Greg Campbell, reporting in the *Boulder Weekly*, raised questions about Boulder's plans to dump sludge near a neighboring community. The story helped rally local environmentalists to force the city to reconsider the sludge plan.

In New Hampshire, waste companies have sought to change that state's motto by replacing the words "Live Free or" with "Eat sludge and." Believing they could exploit the state's anti-regulatory sentiment, Waste Management, Wheelabrator and Browning-Ferris Industries have tried to sell New Hampshire citizens on the idea of dumping the sludge from neighboring states over the New Hampshire countryside.

To counter this move, Derek Owen, a Democratic state representative who runs a small family farm near Hopkinton, helped found Citizens for a Future New Hampshire. The anti-sludge group has been fairly successful in fighting the campaign to mire the state in sludge. Last December, about 15 communities, with the assistance of Owen's group, passed laws forbidding sludge dumping. The group is also petitioning the Food and Drug Administration to label all food sold in the United States that is grown on land containing sewage sludge.

If such a regulation were enacted, Stokely USA, a processed vegetable company based in Oconomowoc, Wis., would have to label its peas and sweet corn. Stokely, formerly a part of Stokely Van Kamp, buys peas and corn from farms owned by the family that also owns the state's largest sludge-hauling firm, Potratz-Potratz.

This information came to light during a May 2 hearing of the Waukesha, Wis., Board of Public Works. The city was considering whether to pay Potratz-Potratz to take its sludge and dump it on the Potratz family farms. According to the minutes of the hearing, "Alan Potratz stated that he and his brothers have been hauling sewage to their farm from different plants in the Fox River Valley area for 23 years. ... They own several thousand acres of land near Oshkosh that they farm, basically growing sweet corn and peas for Stokely."

Charlene Lemoine, the waste issues representative for the Waukesha County Environmental Action League (WEAL), was also at that hearing. Thanks to her objections, the board refrained from granting the Potratz brothers the contract, and decided to study the issue.

Lemoine wants to know if what Alan Potratz was saying about Stokely was true, since he had previously lied to the board about having been granted permits to dump his sludge. To that end, WEAL sent a registered letter to Stokely asking the company two questions: "Does Stokely have a written policy regarding land application of

biosolids from waste water treatment plants? Are vegetables purchased from farms applying biosolids from wastewater treatment plants?" According to Lemoine, Stokely has not replied.

But in an interview, Steve Theobald, Stokely's president, told me, "Yes, some of our biggest growers are in that business, they have contracts with local sewage districts." When I asked if he thought that sewage sludge compromised the integrity of Stokely's vegetables, he consulted with someone in his office, and changed his answer. He then told me that because of concerns about heavy metals those growers only use the sludge on "their cash crops." He went on to say, "It is in our contract that they can't apply it on our crops." He refused to provide a copy of that contract.

"What bothers me," says Lemoine, "is that most people don't have any idea that sludge from wastewater treatment plants is being applied to land where their food is grown. All we are doing is asking questions. The Department of Natural Resources says that this program is safe, that it is strictly controlled. But there is no monitoring of wells. And approvals to dump sludge on farms are issued without public comment. The department appears to not like having any questions asked about it."

Defenders of sludge farming point to a March report by the National Research Council, *The Use of Reclaimed Water and Sludge in Food Crop Production*. This study of the EPA sludge regulation, known as Part 503, concluded: "When properly treated, municipal wastewater and sludge can be both safe and effective for irrigating and fertilizing food crops." The study was paid for, in large part, by the Water Environment Federation, the sewer industry association and private waste companies like Wheelabrator.

Michael Baram, a professor of public health law at the Boston University School of Public Health, was one of the 14 authors of the report. He disagrees with the report's conclusions: "You can just look to see who's paying for all this, and you can get a pretty good idea of the vested interest involved." According to Baram, the "main weakness" of the report is that "it did not probe sufficiently into the infectious disease aspects" of the human pathogens contained in the sludge.

Going public with his dissent, he issued this public statement: "Having served on the NAS [the National Academy of Sciences, which in turn operates the National Research Council], which authored the report, I would not want EPA-approved sludge applied to land in my community nor to land within the watershed of my water supply system. Nor would I want to purchase or consume sludge-grown foods or foods containing sludge-grown ingredients. ... [Sludge] poses risks to the health of persons who would be exposed to it. ... The EPA regulation which permits farmland application of treated sludge (Part 503) does not prevent these risks." Unfortunately, Baram's testimony seems to have gotten far less attention from the press than the industry PR blitz designed to persuade Americans that toxic sludge is good for you. ◀

R U S S I A

Absolute Yeltsin

Russians may or may not get to vote for a new president in this month's election, but in either case, the country seems headed into a protracted political crisis. Boris Yeltsin's five-year-old regime—born amid surging popular hopes for democratic reform—is beset by mass social discontent, with Yeltsin and his lieutenants publicly squabbling over the wisdom of holding the election at all. At the same time, a tiny, Kremlin-connected business elite is threatening to touch off civil war if any Russian leader tries to reverse the dubious and often corrupt privatization schemes undertaken during Yeltsin's first term in office.

As Russia's brief northern spring flares into summer, the prevailing mood is decidedly fin-de-siècle. The Russian media—almost unanimously pro-Yeltsin—have abandoned any pretense of objective coverage, presenting instead lurid, at

times hysterical, visions of the neo-Bolshevik hell awaiting Russia if Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov is elected. As political discourse grows more apocalyptic, the economy continues its five-year plunge into oblivion, violent crime and corruption rage unchecked, and the savage fratricidal war in Chechnya grinds on.

Eleven candidates are officially on the ballot for the first round of voting, slated for June 16. Other presidential candidates include liberal Grigory Yavlinsky, ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, retired general Alexander Lebed, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, nouveau-riche businessman Vladimir Bryntsalov and social democratic eye surgeon Svyatoslav Fyodorov.

Given Russia's deeply polarized electorate, no candidate is likely to garner the 51 percent needed to win outright in the first round. Therefore, the two front-runners, whom virtually everyone expects to be Yeltsin and Zyuganov, will face each other in a runoff election on July 7.

Yeltsin is building his campaign on two key stratagems. His publicity people maintain a steady stream of anticommunist rhetoric, aimed particularly at the urban intelligentsia, state functionaries, new property owners and well-off professionals. They warn darkly that a Communist victory would bring, at the very least, radical changes in social priorities and patterns of state patronage. Possibly much worse: "Many people think if Zyuganov wins it will be the beginning of civil war," Yeltsin said recently.

Fear of communism runs deep in Russia, and is historically grounded in the depredations of Stalinism and the spectacular collapse of the USSR. But while ideological appeals by the president's camp have induced some Russians to panic, a great many more see the contrast between former Soviet Communist Politburo member Yeltsin and an ex-central committee functionary as far less obvious.

"There is really no significant difference between the hypothetical presidents Yeltsin and Zyuganov," says Nikolai Petrov, an analyst with the Carnegie Endowment in Moscow. "The similarities are so great, the prospect of the Communists coming to power does not frighten voters. Therefore, the presidential team is forced to excite fear and demonize the Communists."

For the majority, who seem more preoccupied with recent miseries, Yeltsin's handlers have given their man a lavish, government-funded image makeover. The "New Yeltsin" promises to reverse most of the initiatives of his first term by halting the war in Chechnya, for example, or reversing the breakup of the Soviet Union. In January, Yeltsin fired his pro-Western foreign minister, as well as the architect of Russia's privatization program, accusing both officials of serious policy mistakes. Two months later, he inaugurated a new

No matter what happens in this summer's elections, Boris Yeltsin seems unlikely to give up power.

By Fred Weir
MOSCOW

confederal union between Russia and Belarus and invited states as far-flung as Bulgaria to join. In May, he pledged to abolish conscription by the year 2000—even though he had earlier moved to roll back Gorbachev-era student deferments and lengthened the term of compulsory service from 18 months to two years.

The war in Chechnya, however, has proven far less amenable to spin control. Chechen leader Dzhokar Dudayev was killed in April by Russian security forces, but separatists have continued to fight. Yeltsin has made major efforts to create a pre-election semblance of momentum for peace—including a face-to-face meeting with Chechen leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev that produced a cease-fire agreement—but a permanent end to fighting may be a long way off.

Ironically, Yeltsin has simultaneously tried to appeal to the nostalgia many Russians feel for past Soviet glories. This year he led a May Day rally through downtown Moscow and lauded “the cause of working people.” (Shortly after the USSR’s demise he threatened to ban the Soviet-era workers’ holiday and replace it with Easter on the Russian calendar.) On the anniversary of V-E Day, he presided over a Soviet-style military parade in Red Square. Standing atop the marble mausoleum of Vladimir Lenin, Yeltsin praised the newly re-legalized red flag as “a sacred symbol of our Motherland,” and at least two dozen times he hailed the assembled troops and veterans as “comrades”—a communist term he has assiduously shunned over the past six years.

In the months leading up to the June vote, Yeltsin has also availed himself of the electoral advantages of government largesse. He has doled out billions in state funds to some of the hardest-hit victims of market reforms, including 7.8 trillion rubles (\$1.6 billion) in accumulated wage arrears to public sector workers and 2.8 trillion rubles (\$560 million) in tax relief for depressed military industries. Several trillion rubles have gone for increased pensions, student benefits, subsidies to scientific institutes and compensation to elderly people whose savings were wiped out by inflation in the first year of market reform. Finance Minister Vladimir Panskov has warned that the government’s 1996 budget is “going badly,” partly because of this orgy of pre-election spending. But Yeltsin won’t be reckoning with the real costs of these outlays anytime soon—Western countries have given him some \$14 billion in loans, most carrying no conditions on their use.

In February, the International Monetary Fund cleared a



\$10.3 billion credit to Russia, front-loaded to deliver almost half the amount this year. “It is extraordinary that this money is being given for discretionary spending by the government, rather than being linked to specific goals,” notes economist Sergei Glazyev, leader of the left-wing Democratic Party of Russia. “And the speed with which it is coming to the country indicates that it will be available to Yeltsin to temporarily increase social spending before the election.”

Yeltsin’s official re-election committee, meanwhile, is composed mainly of ministers currently serving in the Russian government, including Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, two deputy prime ministers and Security Chief Mikhail Barsukov. Such blatant official electioneering on the part of a sitting government would be illegal in any Western democracy, as would the massive use of state resources to fund virtually every aspect of Yeltsin’s campaign.

The media might have sought to bolster democracy in the first Russian election where supreme power is at stake by providing a forum for debate and impartial scrutiny of the candidates. But most press outlets have chosen to suspend Russia’s fragile press freedom—ostensibly to save it. Although the state owns much of the electronic media, and government subsidies still support several major newspapers, many journalists appear to have voluntarily embraced the Kremlin-approved logic that supporting Yeltsin is not a matter of Western-style electoral choice, but a crusade to save Russia from the catastrophe of resurgent communism.

“In theory, of course, it should be for the viewer to decide,” says Alexei Pushkov, director of political affairs for the giant state-controlled Russian Public Television (ORT), which broadcasts to more than 200 million people across the former Soviet Union. “But if everyone plays by the rules of democracy, even though there’s no democracy yet, and if

that brings the Communists to power, then who is responsible? Won't it be the mass media?

"Officially we have not been prohibited from criticizing Yeltsin, but I would argue that today's ORT places more emphasis on the positive side of what Yeltsin is doing. But this is its own choice. ORT does not hide its opinion when faced with the choice of supporting a liberal, whatever one can say against him, and supporting communism."

One analyst recently calculated that Russian TV has given more positive coverage to Yeltsin's activities than its earlier Soviet incarnation accorded to Leonid Brezhnev in his heyday. Yeltsin is constantly in the headlines, shown addressing adoring crowds, competently fielding questions, receiving gifts from grateful locals. Sometimes central TV provides full coverage to the president's campaign speeches in far-flung provincial cities, as though they constituted important breaking news.

Communist candidate Zyuganov, by contrast, is rarely given the opportunity to speak for himself. One could scarcely guess from Russian TV coverage that Zyuganov is running the most intense campaign schedule of any candidate in the brief history of Russian elections. Nor is this oversight confined to the two state-run channels; Russia's only independent television network, NTV, has given fawning and uncritical coverage to the president's campaign since its chairman, Igor Malashenko, joined the Yeltsin re-election committee as its top "image-maker" in March.

"News broadcasts on the three major television stations have come more to resemble paid political advertising for the incumbent president than any attempt at impartial news coverage," the English-language *Moscow Times* recently lamented. "By trying to become an active shaper rather than a reflector of the public mood, the media may be losing their ability to monitor that mood."

Much Russian coverage of the Communist campaign has been steeped in polemical charges that Zyuganov has a secret "maximum program" lurking behind his rather bland social-democratic platform. Among Zyuganov's real designs, the press alleges, are plans to revive the Cold War, reinstate Stalinist prison camps and central planning, renationalize all property, and re-impose travel restrictions and press censorship. Russia's largest-circulation daily, *Kosmopol'skaya Pravda*, went so far as to publish textual excerpts from the alleged Communist master plan in mid-May. The "excerpt"—a catalogue of horrors clumsily rendered in Marxist-Leninist jargon—brought an immediate defamation suit from the Communist Party. "Electoral games are getting out of hand," warned party spokeswoman Irina Makayeva. "Instead of conducting honest debate and letting voters choose among clashing ideas, our opponents are fabricating a phony Zyuganov from whole cloth and using their total control over the media to palm it off as the real thing."

Makayeva says the best way to clear up misunderstandings on all sides would be to hold a televised debate

between the front-runners—a key Communist proposal that has yet to be taken up by the Yeltsin camp. "Each candidate could spell out his core beliefs and intentions, without anyone between them and the voters to distort what they think," she says.

Queried about the proposed debate by a Russian journalist, Yeltsin replied, "I was a Communist for 30 years and heard so much of that demagoguery that today, given my democratic worldview, I can no longer endure that demagoguery."

Many in Yeltsin's camp still fear that state financing, open-handed international support and media cheerleading may not stave off the supreme danger of defeat at the polls. Like Soviet Communists—which most of them had been before their timely conversion to the cause of reform—they believe that political power and the interests it promotes are too important to be left to the people.

"Please excuse me for my cynicism, but no one cares about the masses," Vladimir Shumeiko, a top Kremlin adviser and leader of the Kremlin-sponsored Reforms-New Course movement, a Yeltsin support group, told *Komsomolskaya Pravda* recently. "The masses have always been discontented. The system is determined by its working centers and not by the masses. And these centers have linked themselves to the new order and the new economy."

In Russia, however, this new elite rests on a dangerously narrow social base and has a serious—perhaps fatal—legitimacy problem. As the presidential elections approach, members of the elite have grown increasingly jittery. In late April, 13 of Russia's top bankers and business tycoons published an open letter warning of civil war and national breakup unless the contending forces sat down to negotiate a power-sharing arrangement. Although the businessmen's public message spoke of "compromise and national accord," most analysts believe that they privately published a scheme for canceling the elections and installing a coalition government, with Yeltsin remaining president and Zyuganov taking the prime minister's job.

Within days, Yeltsin's chief bodyguard and tennis partner, Gen. Alexander Korzhakov, weighed in with a similar view—almost certainly with his boss' full approval. "If we have the elections, there is no way of avoiding a fight," Korzhakov told journalists. "A lot of influential people are in favor of postponement, and I'm in favor of it too because we need stability. People must be given time to calmly think about everything and reach a mature conclusion. For this, more time is needed than we have until June 16," he said.

Russia's elite has good reason to be fearful. Anyone from outside its circle who steps into the top Kremlin job—be it Zyuganov or the gentlemanly liberal Grigory Yavlinsky—will sack most of the country's top officials and order a thorough legal review of the privatizations of the past two years.

Yeltsin inherited a fragile but dynamic democratic experiment begun by Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev's reforms included a powerful, freely elected national parliament and representative legislatures at all local levels. In the name of

speeding up market reforms, Yeltsin has systematically rolled back these innovations, replacing Gorbachev's fledgling democracy with a new autocracy that completely identifies officialdom with the country's rising business class.

In 1993, Yeltsin illegally overturned the constitution he was elected under, suspended the Constitutional Court (which was set up to police both executive and legislative branches of government) and dissolved the parliament. When lawmakers resisted, he drove them out with gunfire. At the same time, he abolished most regional legislatures and turned over their power to presidentially appointed governors. He then authored a new constitution, awarding almost unlimited power to the president, and had it adopted in a public referendum—the results of which, many experts now believe, were falsified.

"Yeltsin promised he would use his vast power to speed up the transition to capitalism, and many in the West applauded this," says Andrei Kolganov, a political scientist at Moscow University. "But what has happened is a kind of bandit reform, in which those with political power have divided up the country's wealth among themselves and their friends. With all power concentrated in the Kremlin, there has been nothing to check the marriage of state officialdom with new capitalists to create an all-powerful oligarchy."

Russia's notorious criminal gangs—the *mafiya*—have increasingly moved to launder their profits and legitimize their activities by investing in business. According to sociologist Olga Kryshnanovskaya, about 35 percent of the capital behind Russia's new financial-industrial empire has criminal origins.

Partly as a result of the previous parliament's destruction and the vast concentration of power in the hands of a narrow state bureaucracy, almost all privatizations of the past three years have been conducted outside the law. Some are loosely underpinned by presidential decrees, which will remain in force only so long as Yeltsin occupies the Kremlin. During this period, control over many of Russia's most valuable resources has passed into private hands. Huge and fabulously wealthy business empires have been built.

Even the original architect of Russia's "shock therapy" program, Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, recently decried the post-1993 privatizations as "a remarkable plunder of state assets. ... The second stage of privatization appears to have delivered literally tens of billions of dollars in state assets in the oil, gas and metals sector to powerful insiders in the government, the banks and the enterprises." (See *In These Times*, April 29, 1995.) And in an unprecedented comment to the *Moscow Times*, Sachs called for "a reversal of last year's natural resource privatizations, on the grounds of social equity and the rule of law."

The extent of anger across the political spectrum at the arbitrary and corrupt nature of recent privatizations emphasizes what's at stake for Russia's new elite in the election. The 13 tycoons who signed the open letter calling for "national accord"—and who later met privately with

Zyuganov and other candidates to press their case—were some of the biggest winners in the privatization sweepstakes and hence stand to lose in any legal review of the process.


"Only Yeltsin, who signed the decrees and presides over the current network of patronage, can guarantee no awkward questions will be asked," says Moscow University's Kolganov. "Anyone else is potentially dangerous to them."

In addition to offering Communist leaders various inducements to join the Yeltsin team and get their share—an option since explicitly rejected by Zyuganov—the businessmen made a very public threat. "Those who are banking on ideological revanche and social confrontation must understand that Russian businessmen have the necessary resources to deal with excessively unprincipled and uncompromising politicians," their open letter declared. Private security companies and Russian business conglomerates are estimated to have some 600,000 men under arms.

With so much on the line for so many of Russia's elite, few expect the coming presidential elections to be fair—even if both rounds of voting are allowed to take place as scheduled—or for Yeltsin to voluntarily relinquish power if he loses. "I can't imagine Yeltsin leaving his office as a result of any voting, or any situation other than death," says the Carnegie Endowment's Petrov. "The priorities of the Yeltsin regime are first to keep power, second to win elections by manipulating or falsifying the process, and third, if it should be possible, to win through honest elections. That would be nice, but not necessary." ◀

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P O L A N D

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N

*Solidarity's
bid to reform
Poland's
privatization
policies faces
an uncertain
future.*

By Kenneth Zapp
and Magda
Paleczny-Zapp

Nearly seven years after ending Communist rule, Poland remains unsure about how to institute a property-based economy and social order. The "shock therapy" market reforms the country embraced shortly after Communism's collapse have, if anything, deepened the skepticism many Poles harbored toward free-market capitalism. And skepticism has in many instances hardened into cynicism, as Poles witness the rise of a new entrepreneurial class that plucks up government firms at rock-bottom prices and eagerly displays its wealth in this still desperately poor country.

One telling measure of the country's mounting ambivalence came in February, when Polish citizens voted in a referendum on state privatization. More than 93 percent of the 9 million Poles who turned out to vote endorsed a Soli-

darity-backed plan to enact drastic changes to the mass privatization law that became effective this year. However, since the vote's turnout fell short of 50 percent of registered voters—the proportion required to mandate changes in Polish national law—the balloting had no more than a symbolic impact on the policy debates convulsing Poland's economic and political life.

Nevertheless, these debates are not about to go away. The beleaguered Solidarity leadership, which sponsored the February referendum, has advanced an ambitious initiative that would place the country's privatization plan on a broad footing of public investment, rather than relying on the strategy of rapid market-based investment enacted in the newly implemented plan. Solidarity leaders dispute the central economic assumptions of the plan—which was originally enacted by the country's last anti-Communist government in 1993. Adam Biela, chair of Solidarity's Committee on Appropriation, says, "Appropriation must take place

because the wealth of Poland was the physical and intellectual work of Poles following World War II in the form of forced accumulation." In Solidarity's view, economic justice requires that this wealth must be returned to the people who created it.

Poland's current mass privatization plan, inspired by the free-market theories of Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, sought to institute a top-down investment course, in which 20 large National Investment Firms (NIFs) would acquire many of the country's medium- and large-sized state-owned firms. The NIFs would create new capital markets for Polish equities—the theory went—while protecting the privatization process from being reversed in the event of a Communist return to power. And since Polish citizens would hold most of the shares in the new NIFs, they would eventually buy and sell their shares, thereby creating another new market for securities.

Yet the Sachs privatization plan had a critical flaw. In order to proceed efficiently, it required the rapid sell-off of state firms—since Sachs assumed that only private owners could be counted on to act in the interests of the companies when such actions could damage large political constituencies. And the Polish political process has not accommodated itself to this demand. The three years from the plan's official adoption to its implementation early this year were consumed by fights over many of its details—particularly on such critical questions as which firms would be included, who would select management companies and which political leaders would oversee the whole privatization process. Originally designed to place 600-800 firms into the NIFs' hands, the plan only distributed shares of 400 firms to 15 NIFs (this number, too, was down from the 20 origi-

nally envisioned in the legislation). By March, only 8 million of 28 million qualified Poles had registered to receive their shares in NIFs—this despite the comparatively modest price of an NIF share, which could be had for a registration fee of about \$8.

Solidarity leaders—who had initially supported the Sachs plan—are now harsh critics of the course of privatization in Poland. (Indeed, current political debate in Poland is something of a trip through the looking glass, with the country's former Communists, who are clustered in the Democratic Left Alliance, switching from their initial hostility toward mass privatization to support of the plan after they came to power in parliament in 1994.) Solidarity critics of the plan such as Tomasz Wojcik, president of the Wroclaw region of Solidarity, argue that it gives far too much economic authority to mutual fund managers—who are expected to coordinate the investment strategies of foreign investors and Polish citizens alike. These managers, in Solidarity's view, know nothing about how to run companies; moreover, the rapid turnover of paper shares in companies does not improve the efficiency of company operations. Solidarity leaders also stress that most Polish citizens feel poorer since the fall of Communism, despite the country's official embrace of markets as the path to prosperity. Solidarity claims that the NIF approach will not adequately compensate Polish citizens for all the sacrifices they have made since 1945.

Solidarity now calls for a radical redistribution of all state property directly to citizens—based on how long each citizen lived under Communist rule. This sounds, especially to many in the former Soviet bloc, like a return to the ideology of Marxism. But backers of the Solidarity plan are, like their political forerunners in the Gdansk shipyards, Christian socialists rather than Marxist ideologues. Indeed, Solidarity leaders go out of their way to shun the term "socialist," citing instead their countryman Pope John Paul II's critique of capitalism as an engine of social inequality and hollow materialism.

The Solidarity plan would seek to transfer the state's accumulated wealth as directly as possible to Polish citizens. The first step would be to inventory the value of all state property: enterprises, farms, forests and apartments. People would acquire their portion of these assets in any of several ways: ownership of their apartments or the land they work, or shares in their employers' firms or fledgling investment funds.

The government could then offer additional credit to firms, peasants and entrepreneurs based on the value of capital remaining under state control. Using state capital to fund credit plans for the ordinary Pole also offers a promising route out of Eastern Europe's Catch-22: How to create capitalism without capital?

But despite such advantages, Solidarity's plan has yet to attract decisive levels of support—even with its strong showing in February's low-turnout referendum. In part, this is because the union has not pulled together the elements of a

popular coalition to win political power. Solidarity's mission of linking labor to the Church dramatically limits its effectiveness as a power broker in Polish politics. Its leadership now refuses to cooperate with parties that oppose the authority of the Church (such as the Democratic Left Alliance and the Labor Party)—let alone with those parties that still endorse the NIF approach.

Following the referendum, President Alexander Kwasniewski tried to recapture the initiative on privatization by announcing that he would convene a summit of political and labor leaders in March. Without specifying any details, he also said that future privatization efforts would try to strengthen workers' pension funds. Solidarity's Adam Biela responded by calling for a grass-roots campaign to force the government to enact Solidarity's plan to appropriate and redistribute state wealth.

Meanwhile, most of the long-heralded NIF certificates remain unclaimed; less than half of the eligible recipients have bothered to register for their certificates. Their market value ranges from \$10 in the countryside to \$18 in Warsaw—a far cry from the windfall many were led to expect in the wake of Communism's fall. ▲

Kenneth Zapp is a professor of economics at Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis. Magda Paleczny-Zapp is an associate professor of international business at Augsburg College in Minneapolis.



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BLACK AMERICA

Soul-searching on ice

The cover story of the March 18 edition of *People* magazine focused on racism in Hollywood and concluded that the “the continued exclusion of African-Americans” from the film industry is “a national disgrace.” The publication, a product of Time Warner/Turner’s publishing division, conducted a four-month examination of Hollywood’s hiring practices and found numerous examples of racist exclusion. Interestingly, the magazine could have investigated the executive offices of its corporate parent—or better yet, its own reporting staff—and found similarly disgraceful examples of racism. But why quibble? *People*’s decision to focus such public attention on such a pervasive yet unreported problem is worthy of praise.

As the media grapple with America’s persistent racial polarization, black leftists wonder when—and if—their voices will be heard.

By Salim Muwakkil

No sooner had praise been registered for *People*’s new and mystifying sense of

social conscience, when Condé Nast’s *The New Yorker* devoted its entire April 29 and May 6 double issue to matters “Black In America.” The edition featured an all-black cast of staff writers considering a wide array of subjects, from Minister Louis Farrakhan to life in experimental all-black communities in Oklahoma. A breezy essay noting the cultural centrality but economic marginality of African-Americans to American life opens the issue. Penned by editor Hendrik Hertzberg and guest editor Henry Louis Gates Jr., the essay recounts the history of African-American presence and concludes: “The history that is at the root of the ‘differentness’ of blacks—what might be called African-American exceptionalism—cannot be changed. There is only one option, and it is to make our country live up to its nominal creed.”

While the country was still digesting the food for thought offered in *The New Yorker* special, word came that *Nightline*, ABC’s “weighty” news show, was devoting an entire week to exploring issues of race relations in late May. In May, officials at Turn-

er Broadcasting’s (i.e., Time Warner/Turner’s) CNN also announced it would schedule several “Special Reports” on issues of race relations.

Suddenly, issues of race relations are in vogue and receiving a long-overdue public hearing. Several questions are provoked by this apparent concert in focusing on racial issues. Why? is one.

“I think many Americans were truly troubled by the extent of racial polarization demonstrated in the varied reactions to the O.J. Simpson verdict,” says Michael Eric Dyson, director of the Institute of African-American Research and professor of communication studies at the University of North Carolina. “I think that some of these program decisions were made with those considerations in mind.” Although he welcomes the attention such efforts focus on the problem of racism, Dyson decries the “squandered opportunity to really educate the American public about the most serious and intractable aspects of U.S. racism: white supremacy.”

The author of several books on racial issues, including *Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X*, Dyson believes that real solutions to our racial impasse are located in the reordering of white supremacist culture. Dyson and other black cultural critics—such as bell hooks and Cornel West, who call themselves “radical democrats”—have sharpened their attacks on Eurocentric conceptions of Western culture that systematically ignore or devalue the civilizational contributions of Africa’s children. They argue that notions of white supremacy are not limited to the ravings of Aryan Nation and Ku Klux Klan types, but saturate the common understanding of Western civilization.

"From Hume to Hegel and Jefferson, and on to the contemporary age," Dyson writes, "Western political thought is pervaded with presumptions of white supremacy and its corollary, black inferiority."

Such issues rarely receive reasoned consideration in the mass media, Dyson and others complain, and this partially accounts for the surprise most whites have registered at the widening rift between races in America. "Sure, I think a lot of whites were shocked by the extreme levels of polarization," says Robert Starks, political science professor at Chicago's Northeastern University and a black nationalist. "They were saying, 'Damn, I thought I knew how these black folks think, but I guess I don't.' So from that point of view, I think they were shocked that black people were increasingly impervious to their propaganda."

Starks notes that the October 16 Million Man March succeeded despite the mainstream media's attempt first to devalue the event and, failing that, to demonize it. "I'm sure many people were surprised that more than 1 million black men would ignore the relentlessly negative coverage the march and Minister Farrakhan received and travel to Washington anyway," he says.

According to Starks, *Nightline's* choice of experts for the concluding episodes of its recent series laid bare the media's motives in discussing race issues. "Their ideological range was so narrow," Starks says. "They had a few liberals and a slew of conservatives. Where were the ideological leftists and the nationalists?"

Starks argues that the mainstream media's new interest in the race question derives from its need to control the parameters of the answer. *The New Yorker's* black-oriented issue, he argues, is no exception. Starks and other black nationalists particularly deride the growing influence of Henry Louis Gates Jr., W.E.B. Du Bois Professor of the Humanities and chair of the department of Afro-American studies at Harvard University.

The idea for the magazine's April 29-May 6 all-black edition, and much of its resultant flavor, owes much to Gates' efforts. His excellent journalism is becoming a fixture in *The New Yorker* and other prestigious organs of literate liberalism. But more importantly, Gates is increasingly assuming a role akin to that of Booker T. Washington at the turn of the century; he is becoming white America's favorite custodian of the black experience.

One of the first recipients of a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award, the 44-year-old Gates has become an academic superstar. He initially gained fame for unearthing Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig*, the first novel published by a black person in the United States. He later became known as an innovative literary theorist, incorporating elements of post-modern and vernacular theory in his writing. His prolific scholarly output and his entrepreneurial abilities soon made him one of the most sought-after academics in recent years. Beginning his academic career at Yale, Gates later moved to Cornell, Duke and in 1991 to Harvard, where he has

become something of an impresario, attracting top national talent to Harvard and transforming the school's black studies department into one of the country's premier academic programs.

Gates' prominence has provoked disparate responses: Some welcome his access as an opportunity to keep black concerns in the forefront of liberal politics, while others condemn him as apolitical. In the withering words of social critic Adolph Reed Jr., Gates is only "interpreting the opaquely black heart of darkness for whites." Reed, a left-leaning professor of political science at Northwestern University, opposes Starks' black nationalism, but both agree that Gates has exercised a "demobilizing" influence.

People magazine's exposé of Hollywood racism also provoked some ambivalence among black observers. "The film industry has always been a disaster area for black participation," Dyson says. "The *People* magazine story should be applauded. They did the best of what pop journalism can be expected to do. The story can make a difference, if we use the information it provided effectively. And we also have to insist that they follow-up on their exposé."

Milwaukee-based nationalist Taki Raton, however, detects an ulterior motive behind the recent coverage of race in *People*, *The New Yorker* and *Nightline*: profit. "They all expanded their market share by dealing with race issues," he says. "I purchased a *People* magazine for the first time in my life because of the headline about racism in Hollywood, and I bet you I wasn't alone. And I'm sure that a lot more middle-class blacks look a lot more favorably at *The New Yorker* because of its black issue. It's capitalism pure and simple—white capitalism at that."

Raton may be right, but he also misses a more important point. The polarizing events of 1995 forced many Americans to look deeply into the ugly soul of our apartheid culture—and it wasn't a pretty sight. The depressing images that were revealed underscored how urgently this country needs to find a way out of its racial impasse. The recent spurt of media attention devoted to racial issues may indeed be a knee-jerk reaction to the unpleasant revelations of 1995. But if the effort isn't supported, reinforced and sustained, it simply will sputter out. ◀

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ELECTION

Losing— the hard way

In the early electoral skirmishing, things have almost all gone Bill Clinton's way. Republicans try out a new issue every few days—so far with little success—but absent some shattering event, the election may be as good as over. Of necessity,

Bob Dole has cast about to manufacture his own drama. His resignation from the Senate may have been a step in the right direction: Dole gave a good speech, got some fine media coverage and raised the morale of his staff, all items on the credit side. But media-schooled voters are likely to regard Dole's resignation as a simple campaign gimmick, especially since it was so obviously an unhappy second choice.

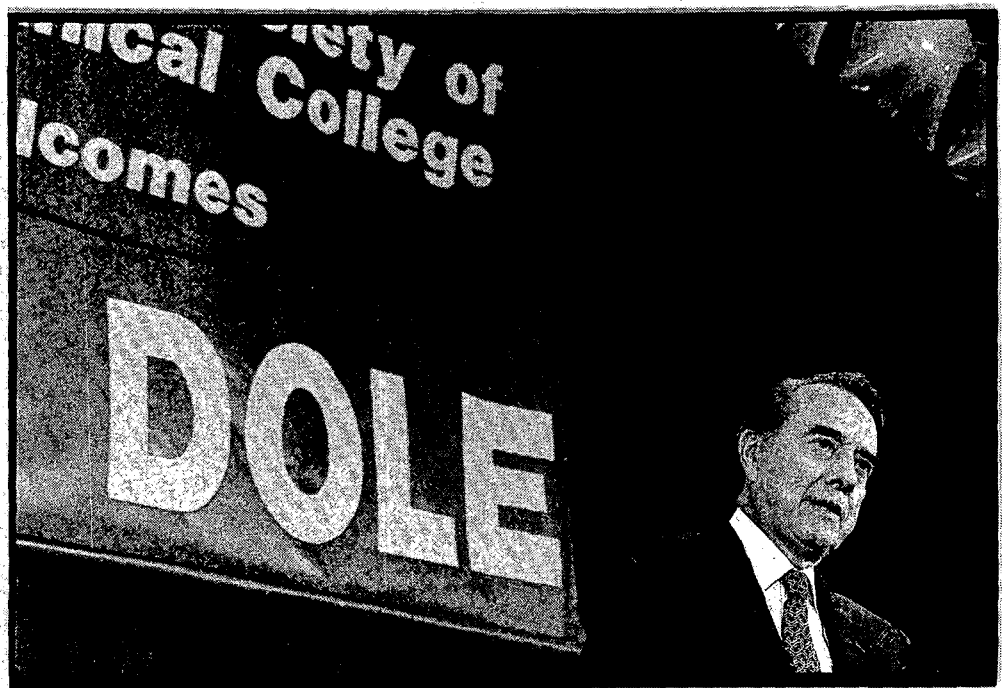
Leaving the Senate marked the total defeat of Dole's "Plan A," which had him managing a stream of legislation through Congress, thus showing that he is a "doer"—unlike the windy president, who had failed to pass his own program and was able only to veto the policies of others. In effect, Dole was hoping to invert Harry Truman's attack on the 80th Congress by running against the "do-nothing" Clinton presidency—a strategy that would have allowed him to promise both more effective government and less government, virtually squaring a political circle. But Clinton and his congressional allies—especially Sen. Tom

Daschle (D-SD)—were better generals, delaying and resisting when they sensed an advantage, until it was Dole who seemed to be the author of legislative gridlock. Astonishingly, by staunchly opposing an increase in the minimum wage, Republicans have even allowed Clinton to present himself as the champion of the working class, despite his very slender claims to that title. In the end, abandoning Capitol Hill may have been Dole's only chance of averting disaster.

In any case, Dole's image as a master of the corridors of

*Dole's old-time
Protestant
virtues speak to
an America
that's now
long gone.*

By Wilson Carey
McWilliams



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power has always sharply conflicted with efforts to portray him as an exemplar of rectitude. Now that he is “just a man,” his campaign can work more freely to undo—symbolically—his decades of service in Congress and send him, like Antaeus in the ancient myth, back to the Earth, his source of strength: “This,” Dole said shortly after leaving Washington, “is where I touch the ground.” Earlier this year Dole presented himself as the defender of his party’s vital center, declaring the primaries to be a contest for “the soul of the Republican Party.” At the deepest level, his new rhetoric hints that to save his candidacy and his party, he must recover his own political soul.

The problem, of course, is that Dole was shaped by an almost vanished way of life: Few Americans probably comprehend his reference to “old railroad towns.” “I trust in the hard way,” Dole said, but the stern, Protestant virtues of Main Street are yielding to the en masse relativities of the suburbs and shopping malls. Most Americans rely on credit rather than saving; their creed is self-expression rather than self-denial; they measure dignity by what they consume at least as much as by what they produce. As David Riesman predicted two generations back, prevailing opinion has remarkably little appreciation for the inner-direction and silent fortitude that Dole’s “hard way” implies.

Dole was raised to think it unseemly to talk very much about his handicap or even his military service. “I cannot ... entreat them, for my wound’s sake, to give their suffrage,” Shakespeare’s Coriolanus says, “as if I had received them for



the hire of their breath only.” Instead, Dole always hoped voters would recognize his best qualities through his achievements. In 1988 Dole, disdaining to parade his injuries, bristled at what he felt were Bush’s distortions of his record. Similarly, the “hard way” scorns currying favor—Coriolanus

Continued on page 39

A F R I C A

Heart of darkness

Refugees and internally displaced people are once again on the move—and their numbers rapidly rising in Zaire, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda—in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa.

The world community's reluctance to seek a solution is only exacerbating ethnic violence in Central Africa.

By Carole J.L. Collins

These are the latest ominous signs that the ripple effects of the devastating 1994 genocide in Rwanda are growing rather than abating. The key question is whether the international community will act with sufficient speed and clarity to halt the rapid spread of genocidal thinking and acts across the region.

Distracted by recent crises in Liberia and the Central African Republic, the international community has found it difficult to focus on the rapidly deteriorating situation in Burundi. But recent developments have triggered what a senior diplomatic adviser to the U.N. secretary-general called "the flashing red lights" in this small Maryland-sized

Central African nation of 6.2 million people.

Since March, armed Hutu militias long active in northern Burundi have expanded their attacks on Burundi's predominantly Tutsi Army and Tutsi civilians, moving into the country's previously peaceful central and southern regions. (Only one province is now reportedly still free of ethnic violence.) Rwandan genocideurs—Hutu soldiers and militia in Zairian and Tanzanian refugee camps heavily implicated in the 1994 genocide—are increasingly abetting these Burundi Hutu forces.

The quickening pace and widening scale of such attacks have impelled Burundi Army units and allied Tutsi militias to increase violent reprisals against Hutu civilians (including many displaced in earlier fighting). Between late April and mid-May, more than 20,000 Burundis fled to eastern Zaire seeking greater safety. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates these new refugee arrivals may number as many as 50,000 by early June.

Since early April, Zaire-based Hutu exile forces have increased cross-border raids into both Burundi and Rwanda to assassinate Tutsi officials and, in Rwanda, to free Hutu prisoners accused of genocide. This has significantly eroded support for peaceful negotiations among Tutsis in both nations' Tutsi-dominated governments still traumatized by memories of the 1994 genocide. Many are increasingly scornful of foreign criticism of alleged human rights abuses by the military. Hutu-Tutsi relations within Burundi's shaky coalition government have almost reached breaking point; some fear a coup attempt by Tutsi hard-liners. The raids and greater use of landmines have also jeopardized humanitarian relief work across the region, turning most isolated districts into "no-go" areas.

Despite public promises as early as last November to crack down on the military activity of Rwandan genocideurs in eastern Zaire (as well as "hate" radio broadcasts from Zaire inciting Burundian Hutus to commit acts of genocide), the Zaire government has done little to date. In late April, Burundi and Zaire closed their borders after new charges that Hutu rebels were using Zaire as a launching pad for raids. Although Zaire arrested more than 50 Rwandans actively undermining refugee repatriation efforts in the past three months, most militants continue to operate freely. In late March, a special U.N. commission investigating the illegal training and rearming of genocideurs accused Zaire of aiding or ignoring illegal arms flows and misleading the commission on the issue.

Fears that Tutsi hard-liners may mount a coup to expel all Hutus from Burundi's shaky coalition government and concern over the rising death toll have added urgency to U.S. diplomatic efforts to spark a national political dialogue among Burundi's Hutu and Tutsi leaders. The United States

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has backed an initiative by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere to convene talks in Tanzania between Burundi's warring parties. However, both Hutu and Tutsi government officials oppose talks with Zaire-based Hutu rebel forces, and on May 23 the latest round was again postponed.

Since February, a series of high-ranking U.S. diplomats have visited both Rwanda and Burundi (including U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Madeleine Albright, USAID head Brian Atwood, State Department human rights head John Shattuck and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake). Speaking indirectly to both Burundi's Tutsi Army and Hutu rebels, all warned publicly that any government that came to power by force, Hutu or Tutsi, would be denied international recognition and aid.

In late May, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs George Moose planned to visit Zaire to urge its government to act more forcefully against those refugees promoting genocide. His stopover would undermine a 1993 administration decision to diplomatically isolate Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko for obstructing Zaire's transition to democracy.

The most ominous regional development has been the intensifying ethnic conflict in northeastern Zaire: Close to 300,000 Zairians have been forced to flee their homes north and northeast of the Zairian border town of Goma since last November. By mid-May, more than 400 Zairians had fled to Uganda and more than 11,000 ethnic Tutsi Zairians

to Rwanda following a series of particularly brutal attacks. They and other Zairians charge that Zairian Hutus backed by armed Hutu hard-liners from the refugee camps are trying to create a "Hutuland" by expelling other ethnic groups from the Masisi and Walikale regions. (Some also blame Mobutu for manipulating the region's ethnic tensions for his own political gain.)

In a raid chillingly reminiscent of the 1994 genocide, suspected Hutu attackers on May 12 killed almost 100 Zairian Tutsis and wounded many others who had sought refuge at a French monastery in the Masisi region. (Several hundred are still missing, according to aid agency sources.) In late May, Médecins Sans Frontières of Holland and the U.S. Committee on Refugees warned that another 3,000 Tutsis in two nearby villages were under siege and might be killed unless evacuated by the U.N.

While appalled by the region's gradual descent into genocide, the United Nations has been relatively powerless to halt it. U.N. efforts have been hampered by French opposition—and by a protracted U.N. funding crisis due largely to the failure of the United States to pay its arrears. The U.N. has been able to deploy only five of a planned 35 human rights monitors in Burundi. By late April, the UNHCR had raised only a third of the funding sought in its December 1995 appeal for Rwandan and Burundi refugees. This has forced the agency into a cruel paradox, slashing assistance even as numbers of refugees and internally displaced per-

sons are rapidly rising. On May 20, the U.N. Security Council called on member states to initiate contingency plans for a rapid humanitarian response should more widespread violence develop.

Until recently, the Clinton administration was divided over how to respond. Clinton policy-makers are still sensitive to the lingering political fallout from the Somalia intervention, and much preoccupied with current U.S. commitments in Bosnia and urgent crises in Liberia and the Central African Republic. Yet many in the administration, as in the U.N., are haunted by memories of how, when the genocide in Rwanda unfolded in April 1994 with such chilling premeditation and efficiency, the world sat back and watched and did nothing. Following several months of intensive legal review and debate, the State Department is reportedly ready to label massacres in Burundi as acts of genocide, a determination that would require a more forceful response from the United States and the U.N.

On May 3, Lake and Shattuck met with key NGOs at the White House to signal administration concern over Burundi and solicit NGO views on the possibility of U.N. intervention there. State Department sources say the United States is willing to contribute finances, logistical support, communications and airlift capability for a U.N. intervention force—but not any U.S. soldiers.

While some NGOs believe contingency planning itself might act as a brake on some of the violence, many NGOs—especially those in Burundi itself—fear it will further inflame the situation. Others doubt U.N. military intervention could protect civilians in “safe havens,” given the widespread and decentralized nature of the ethnic violence in Burundi. The U.K.-based group International Alert has urged that a contingency force be stationed along Zaire’s border to stop the flow of weapons and people in and out of the country. Most NGOs worry that planning for such a force may obscure the more pressing need for diplomatic and political efforts at reconciliation. The failure to understand this, many critics say, was the fatal flaw of Western intervention in Somalia.

The Burundi crisis also coincides with a serious policy effort to reckon with the lessons of Rwanda and develop strategies to prevent future genocide in Central Africa and elsewhere. A remarkable five-volume report released by the U.N. in March, *International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience*, suggests that responding solely on a humanitarian basis to an essentially political crisis may well worsen the suffering.

The study, jointly undertaken by a coalition of 20 donor governments (including the United States) and 18 international humanitarian relief agencies, argues that by failing to intervene early in Rwanda (a country of marginal economic or strategic importance to the world’s major powers) the international community—and especially the United States—must “share responsibility for the fact that genocide was allowed to begin” as well as “for the extent of it.”

The study details how the very multiplicity of U.N. agencies and the lack of mechanisms for pooling their informa-

tion caused the U.N. to fail to recognize early warning signs of an impending genocide. Despite evidence of genocide-in-the-making provided by a key Rwandan government informant and passed on by U.N. observers in Rwanda as early as January 1994, the U.N. failed to act. The international community thus signalled an unwillingness to intervene that, in the end, actually encouraged those planning the genocide. Weaknesses of the U.N. Secretariat and inaction by the United States, the strongest power in the U.N. Security Council, combined to prevent any early collective effort by the U.N. to avert the genocide.

The report challenges the notion that there can be neutral-

Zaire’s nightmare

What happens when 2 million uninvited guests—many with unsavory reputations as perpetrators of genocide—arrive for an indefinite stay?

Eastern Zaire has been living an economic, environmental, public health and political nightmare ever since July 1994, when a massive flow of mostly Hutu refugees fleeing the advancing forces of the mostly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) poured across Zaire’s border with Rwanda.

Now the Rwandan refugees’ presence in Zaire is igniting long-simmering ethnic tensions across the region. More than 10,000 Zairians of Tutsi origin have fled to Rwanda for safety; in late May, 400 fled across the border into Uganda. Perhaps as many as 300,000 people north and northeast of Zaire’s border town of Goma are now displaced, driven from their farmland and villages by bands of well-armed Rwandan Hutu Interahamwe militia who have moved in to support their Zairian ethnic kin.

Since last August, Zaire has publicly pressed for the refugees to go home—but has done little to speed their repatriation. Under a December agreement reached with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), the Zairian military launched a half-hearted effort to close down all but the most basic camp economic activities. This was soon abandoned by the unpaid soldiers, though in recent weeks several new attempts have been launched. Most refugees continue to resist pressures to return home, fearing trial or other reprisals for actual or alleged involvement in the 1994 genocide.

The international community has largely ignored the impact of the refugee burden on local Zairians. Rwandan refugees, who receive free food rations, can afford to work for less, boosting local unemployment among Zairians. Cities and countryside have been steadily stripped of trees as refugees search for firewood. (At a recent U.N. meeting in Geneva, the UNHCR appealed to donors for more than \$70 million to help restore the environment.) The sheer rise in numbers of people in the area has pushed up prices of food, clothing and most other goods, making life difficult for local residents on fixed incomes. And epidemics of cholera and other diseases among the refugees have

ity in the face of genocide and heavily criticizes the media. It singles out the *New York Times* for its "appallingly misleading" depiction of the violence as a spontaneous, uncontrollable "blood frenzy," when in fact it was highly organized, methodical and planned. Such coverage helped members of the U.N. to rationalize their own inaction.

The international community's reluctance to seek a solution to the Rwandan refugee crisis—and particularly to bring to book those most responsible for planning the 1994 genocide—is fueling the current regional conflagration, the study argues: "Through its [political] non-intervention, the international community has rewarded extremist elements."

claimed the lives of many Zairians.

When the refugees first arrived, the town of Goma grew from 20,000 to a quarter-million people overnight. More than 170 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) quickly flocked to the region. Preoccupied with the urgent needs of refugee arrivals, they largely neglected those of local residents.

They also ignored the expertise of local Zairian organizations, opting to set up parallel operations with mostly foreign staff to work with refugees on the ground. Unable to match the salaries paid by international agencies, several local NGOs bitterly watched their best workers accept jobs with the U.N. or foreign NGOs. "The end effect has been to weaken our development programs," one Zairian NGO official says.

A visit to the region reveals a two-tier class system of international NGO "haves" and local NGO "have-nots." Most international NGOs have easy access to hard currency for needed imports and vehicles able to withstand Zaire's brutally potholed roads. Most also have access to United Nations fax facilities and attend regular U.N. security briefings.

Local NGOs, by contrast, own few vehicles (most of them old) and must carefully plan each mile of travel to minimize gas expenses. Few have hard currency—increasingly necessary to buy even local supplies since the influx of relief dollars has made local merchants reluctant to accept local currency.

Local NGOs are particularly bitter over the U.N.'s denial of access to its fax facilities. Because neither Goma nor Bukavu, two major refugee centers along Zaire's border with Rwanda, has a working telephone system, communication with donors or colleagues elsewhere in Zaire or overseas is virtually impossible. "Kinshasa is as far as Europe to us," says Batabiha Bushoki, a Goma-based development worker. Formerly, Zairian NGOs would access such services in Rwanda or Burundi to maintain contact with funders, receive and deposit funds and buy supplies. Many international NGOs administered their eastern Zaire programs from Rwanda. The closure of the border ended all that, isolating Zairian NGOs just as the region faced its worst-ever humanitarian crisis.

Local Zairian churches and NGOs were the first to assist Rwandan refugees when they began crossing the border in July 1994. Some brought food and water to the border and

Lacking a coherent political or diplomatic strategy, the international community is thus spending "\$1 million a day to sustain Rwandan refugees in neighboring countries, [which] contributes to a hardening of attitudes" among the victims of genocide.

If there's one lesson from Rwanda, concludes the report, it is that "humanitarian action cannot substitute for political action." Dare we risk continuing to do the same, once again, in Central Africa? ◀

Carole J.L. Collins is diplomatic and U.N. correspondent for the *National Catholic Reporter*. She recently traveled on assignment to Rwanda and eastern Zaire.

suggested places refugees could stay. Others told arriving refugees the local exchange rate and price of a cow so they would not be cheated by local profiteers. Still others undertook the grisly task of burying refugees who died by the hundreds on city streets and rural roads. One Zairian development NGO near Bukavu's airport, ADI-KIVU, now hosts its own refugee camp of almost 7,000 people, most of them family and friends of Rwandan NGO representatives who met their Zairian counterparts at regional conferences prior to the 1994 genocide.

The prolonged Rwandan refugee crisis has also seriously destabilized the security of the region. Mpirikana Forongo of ACODRI, a Goma-based environmental group, says the refugees had sold arms to local Zairians, especially ethnic Hutu. These arms have militarized local ethnic conflicts over land, especially in the Masisi and Walikale areas north of Goma.

Such insecurity has provided a convenient pretext, many local Zairians charge, for President Mobutu Sese Seko to boost his military presence in a region known to be politically hostile to him. In fact, the increased Zairian military presence has proven as burdensome to local residents as the refugees. On April 18, the Catholic Bishop of Bukavu wrote to Donald Simpson, the new U.S. ambassador to Zaire, decrying the many "underpaid [Zairian] soldiers forced to steal from the people to survive" and pleading for Simpson to "use his influence with the Zairian authorities" to defuse the "explosive situation" in which the people of Bukavu are living.

The region's security worries will continue for as long as the refugees stay—and no one knows how long that will be. Most refugees oppose the plan agreed to at the November Carter Center-initiated conference in Cairo to repatriate 10,000 refugees a day over a three-month period. Fearing arrest or harassment from the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan government, many continue to resist repatriation. Zaire has agreed not to return them by force, although many local Zairians enthusiastically back such a move.

Dealing with the local social and economic effects of the refugee crisis "will take a process lasting at least one generation," says Bagenda Balagizi of the Anti-Bwaki Committee, a Bukavu-based hunger-relief and development group. But whether the international community will provide any significant assistance to that process remains to be seen.

—C.J.L.C.

GAY RIGHTS

Court: equal = equal

*In overturning
Colorado's
anti-gay
constitutional
amendment,
the Supreme
Court upheld
the basic
principles of
the 14th
Amendment.*

By Gary Barlow

In a November 1992 vote that confounded pollsters, Colorado voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment to repeal anti-discrimination ordinances and statutes that protected gays and lesbians. Backed by Colorado for Family Values and other anti-gay groups, Amendment 2 also prohibited future passage of similar anti-discrimination laws.

Passage of the Colorado amendment had ramifications throughout the country. A national boycott of Colorado, tourism and convention officials estimate, cost the state tens of millions of dollars. But anti-gay proponents, emboldened by their success in a state thought to be relatively progressive, sought to repeat their success with similar initiative efforts throughout the country. While state-wide attempts in Idaho, Oregon and Maine were

defeated at the polls, local initiatives have been successful, notably in Cincinnati and Gainesville, Fla. Other attempts, such as in Washington, have failed to gain enough signatures to make the ballot, and some, as in Tampa, Fla., have been thwarted by court rulings. But all of these initiative efforts have sapped time, energy and political capital from the movement for gay rights.

Now, thanks to a May 20 U.S. Supreme Court decision, the nightmare of blanket rights denial in America is over. In its decision, the Court held Amendment 2 to be an unconstitutional violation of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. Unlike many of this Court's recent decisions, it was a clear and solid statement against discrimination. The 6-3 majority opinion, written by Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, a Reagan appointee, left no doubt about the Court's opinion and left fellow Reagan appointee Justice Antonin Scalia sputtering indignantly in dissent.

Joined in the majority by Justices John Paul Stevens, Sandra Day O'Connor, David H. Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen G. Breyer, Justice Kennedy was concise and to the point: "It is not within our constitutional tradition to enact laws of this sort," he wrote. "[The] amendment seems inexplicable by anything but animus toward the class that it affects. ... A law declaring that in general it shall be more difficult for one group of citizens than for all others to seek aid from the government is itself a denial of equal protection of the laws in the most literal sense. ... [A] law must bear a rational relationship to a legitimate governmental purpose, and Amendment 2 does not. ... We must conclude that Amendment 2 classifies homosexuals not to further a proper legislative end but to make them unequal to everyone else. This Colorado cannot do."

The force and clarity of the ruling elated the gay and lesbian community. Suzanne Goldberg, lead attorney for the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the gay and lesbian advocacy group that led the effort to overturn Amendment 2, is optimistic about future court rulings in the wake of this decision. "We are arguing in other court cases affecting gays and lesbians, including same-sex marriage and military service cases, that [anti-gay] sentiment is the sole basis for discrimination," Goldberg says. Referring to the infamous *Bowers v. Hardwick*, a ruling 10 years ago that upheld Georgia's sodomy laws, Goldberg added that "this decision marks a major positive change in the court's treatment of gays and lesbians. We have rounded a corner with the Court's firm rejection of anti-gay bias as a legitimate reason for discrimination."

Seattle attorney Jan Bianchi also sounded a hopeful note, remarking that "when the Supreme Court started recogniz-

ing gender discrimination, they started out this way. The language of this opinion is the most respectful yet of the rights of gays and lesbians. Essentially, the Court said to those who would discriminate that you are going to have to show us some fact other than that you are afraid of gays and lesbians as a basis for discrimination."

Melinda Paras, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, expects that this ruling will force retraction of initiatives like those passed in Cincinnati and Gainesville. Overjoyed by the ruling, Paras believes that "It bodes well for the future. The Court is asking for a much higher standard than 'we don't like them.' " Still, Paras warns, "We have to keep working and organizing politically."

Some aspects of that political struggle may be played out in this year's presidential race. Right-wing political strategists are already sounding alarms about same-sex marriage in an effort to tarnish Democrats, and Bill Clinton has characteristically given ground on this issue. But Clinton appointees were an essential part of the majority in this decision, and that may temper concerns of gay and lesbian voters over the president's announcement that he would sign the Defense of Marriage Act if it passes Congress.

Justice Scalia's dissent added a chilling note to this victory. In an opinion read from the bench, Scalia declared that the "Court has mistaken a Kulturkampf [culture war] for a fit of spite." The majority opinion, he charged, "places the prestige of this institution behind the proposition that opposition to homosexuality is as reprehensible as racial or religious bias. ... This Court has no business imposing upon all Americans the resolution favored by the elite class from which the members of this institution are selected, pronouncing that animosity toward homosexuality ... is evil. I vigorously dissent."

According to observers, Scalia was visibly angry as he read his opinion, which was joined by Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justice Clarence Thomas. Although Kennedy's opinion did not refer to *Bowers v. Hardwick*, Scalia referred to it pointedly. The holding in *Bowers*, he said, is unassailable, "except by those who think that the

Constitution changes to suit current fashions. ... There can hardly be more palpable discrimination than making the conduct that defines the class criminal. ... The Court's opinion contains grim, disapproving hints that Coloradans have been guilty of animus or animosity toward homosexuality, as though that has been established as un-American."

The most disturbing section of Scalia's opinion stereotyped gays and lesbians in terms reminiscent of Nazi characterizations of Jews. "The

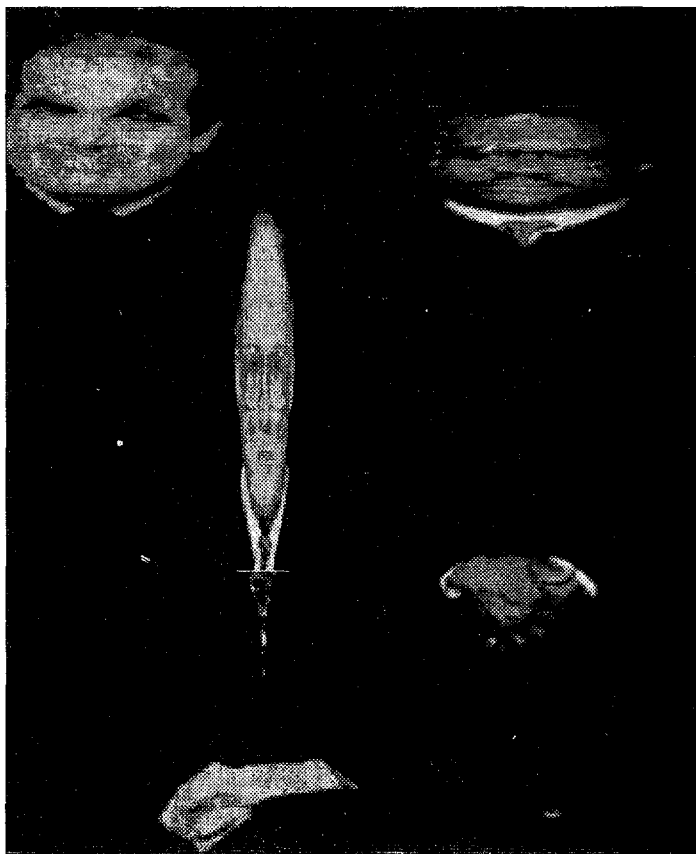
problem ... for those who wish to retain social disapprobation of homosexuality," Scalia wrote, "is that, because those who engage in homosexual conduct tend to reside in disproportionate numbers in certain communities, have high disposable income, and of course care about homosexual rights issues much more ardently than the public at large, they possess political power much greater than their numbers, both locally and statewide. ... It is also nothing short of preposterous to call 'politically unpopular' a group which enjoys enormous influence in American media and politics."

Sue Hyde, head of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Fight the Right Project, was astound-

ed by this language. "Scalia's opinion," she said, "is really frightening in that he starts out with this German allusion and then describes gays and lesbians in the U.S. in terms the Nazis used to demonize Jews in Germany in the 1930s."

Meanwhile, in Colorado Springs—home of Focus on the Family, the nation's largest, richest, most powerful anti-gay organization—Frank Whitworth of Ground Zero, a gay and lesbian group, is taking the decision in stride. "We won't relax here," Whitworth said, after hearing the decision. "We're still being attacked in a lot of venues—marriage, the military, schools. We view Focus on the Family as the key archenemy of gays and lesbians. ... The ruling is a great educational tool—we've been seeing a bit of a breeze of change with some people now questioning their own votes in favor of Amendment 2. We also feel a little more exposed because of the danger of an overreaction from the fringe element right now. We'll keep doing what we've been doing, building coalitions and partnerships with people here. We just can't relax."

Gary Barlow is a Spokane, Wash.-based freelance writer.



IN PRINT

Chronic devastation

By Sam Hussein

"Does that mean you're a lazy ass?" a friend asked when I told him I'd been diagnosed with "chronic fatigue syndrome." The question revealed not just a popular misconception but a failure of public health policy. Poor terminology—the coinage of a few government scientists with little first-hand exposure to sufferers—is just one of the problems of the federal response to this debilitating ailment, as detailed in Hillary Johnson's *Osler's Web*.

Johnson's book issues a sorely needed wake-up call about an epidemic that has devastated the lives of an estimated 2 million sufferers in the United States alone. More appropriately called chronic fatigue and immune dysfunction syndrome (CFIDS), it is a complicated illness that causes debilitating exhaustion—"fatigue" is putting it mildly—as well as muscle and joint pain, and other afflictions of the immune and nervous systems.

Osler's Web is a stirring narrative, rich with heroes, villains and dramatic stories of individual sufferers: a professional football player now housebound, surviving on worker's compensation; a computer programmer whose IQ dropped from 130 to 85; a family who sold off the kids' musical instruments since they would likely never be able to play them again. In one outbreak in a school in Lyndonville, N.Y., children have been ill for so long they no longer remember what life was like before the illness.

The most dramatic mass outbreak of CFIDS was in Incline Village, Nev., in the mid-'80s. After seeing over a hundred patients with similar symptoms within a few months, two of the book's heroes, Drs. Dan Peterson and Paul Cheney, called the national Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC, after much prodding, finally sent two investigators, who spent virtually no time with the patients, and basically dismissed the complaints. One of them later characterized the outbreak as little more than the ravings of "a lot of neurotic women."

Peterson and Cheney, however, stayed on the case.

Together with a few other doctors and researchers, they continued their investigations, often incurring the scorn of their colleagues. That dismissive attitude is still shaping government policy—the CDC's current lead investigator still believes that the Incline Village outbreak was a case of mass hysteria, according to a recent *Prime Time Live* segment.

The medical establishment's attitude of denial when confronted with an unknown ailment is hardly novel. Johnson notes that multiple sclerosis was originally known as "faker's disease." Dr. David Bell, another of the heroes of *Osler's Web*, points out in his own book, *The Doctor's Guide to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome* (Addison-Wesley, 1995), that AIDS was thought by many in the medical establishment to be psychosomatic until the fatalities started to mount. The CDC's unprofessional response to lyme disease led to the establishment of the lyme disease center in Denver, away from the CDC's Atlanta headquarters.

The lead villain in *Osler's Web*, however, is Stephen Straus of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). After the apparent disproof of his initial theory—that CFIDS is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus—Straus arrogantly dismissed the illness, suggesting it was largely psychosomatic. In 1994, he dismissed dozens of studies documenting immune system abnormalities in CFIDS sufferers and argued that the ailment was largely due to "poor sleep hygiene." Johnson so thoroughly demonizes Straus that it will be a rare reader of *Osler's Web* who does not wonder whether injecting Straus with the blood of a CFIDS sufferer might be an appropriate way to research whether the ailment is contagious.

Since the book's release, Johnson's public statement that CFIDS may be contagious has led many sufferers to fear ostracism or worse. But so little research is being done that the issue is far from certain. Dr. Cheney, who has been ahead of the curve on CFIDS since the Incline Village outbreak, recently noted that if the disease is infectious, it is possible that the sufferers and the carriers are two distinct groups.

Johnson levels some criticism at the syndrome's largest patient organization, the CFIDS Association of America (which helped fund the book), for eschewing ACT-UP tactics and for gradually being co-opted by U.S. public health policy.

When I contacted the organization, Vicki Carpman—who edits its journal, the *CFIDS Chronicle*—said that the government's role "has changed significantly for the better" since 1994, noting that John-

OSLER'S WEB

Inside the Labyrinth of the
Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
Epidemic

HILLARY JOHNSON

Jacket design for *Osler's Web*:
Inside the Labyrinth of the Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Epidemic
By Hillary Johnson
Published by Crown Publishers, 1996

**Osler's Web: Inside the
Labyrinth of the
Chronic Fatigue
Syndrome Epidemic**
By Hillary Johnson
Crown Publishers
720 pp., \$30

son's data is current only through that year. But Carpmann also said that just this year the NIH dropped funding for CFIDS from three research centers to two. A center at Harvard, which discovered that CFIDS patients suffer from reduced blood flow to parts of the brain similar to AIDS sufferers, is no longer receiving NIH funding. Carpmann told me that the government now spends \$14 million, up from \$2 million a few years ago, on CFIDS. But she conceded that she's not certain where the money is going, and said that it is still an "appallingly small" sum.

Some of the most biting portions of *Osler's Web* have to do with alleged malfeasance by various government agencies. According to Johnson, the Centers for Disease Control took money Congress specifically allocated to CFIDS and diverted it to other areas. The CDC head then lied to Congress about the number of staffers working on CFIDS. Government agencies have low-balled estimates of CFIDS sufferers and have repeatedly postponed studies called for by Congress that might provide more accurate estimates.

Furthermore, the NIH allowed researchers who did receive grants to keep large portions of their proposals secret, a violation of the Freedom of Information Act. Johnson also implies that the FDA's reluctance to approve the drug Ampligen for CFIDS treatment is political—a reluctance to embarrass the NIH and CDC, neither of which views CFIDS as a single, organic ailment.

Also, since CFIDS patients don't have the grace to die off quickly, insurance companies and the Social Security administration have a serious incentive to dismiss the sickness in order to deny benefits. Johnson quotes one physician who is himself disabled by the disease as saying that the "actuarial tables [of disability insurance providers] would be devastated by a widespread epidemic."

As another sufferer points out, a disease is only as big as the celebrities who have it. Blake Edwards is virtually the only Hollywood bigwig to have spoken out about CFIDS, donated money for research and—unsuccessfully—tried to raise money. Cher, who Johnson says has apparently suffered from the illness for years, has stayed mum on the subject. After all, who wants to buy cosmetics and exercise equipment from someone who can barely make it around the block?

Initially dismissed by much of the press as the "yuppie flu," CFIDS has yet to take hold in the public mind. Even with the publication of *Osler's Web*, the ailment continues to be downplayed. A recent *Dateline* segment blew out of all proportion a recent finding that CFIDS patients also suffer blood pressure abnormalities. The suggestion that the cure for this complex ailment may simply be increased salt intake was a serious trivialization, highlighted by a researcher's comment that "two pickles a day keeps the doctor away."

The book's title refers to the Canadian clinician Sir William Osler, who argued that doctors must listen to patients—an approach that has become rarer as doctors have come to rely more on high-tech procedures, and as the length of a visit to the doctor approaches that of the average

political soundbite.

In some ways, Johnson is very traditional. She either ignores or belittles alternative treatments, such as nutritional therapy and acupuncture. She criticizes the name "chronic fatigue syndrome" but continues to use it. She follows in detail the attempts to isolate a single virus as the possible culprit but later notes that CFIDS could be the result of a host of genetic, environmental and other factors, in the process questioning the Western "reductionist model" of wanting to find a single, clear-cut cause.

The question of CFIDS's relationship to other diseases is a provocative one. *The New York Native* has argued for years that CFIDS might be called a form of HIV-negative AIDS. This may yet pan out, but in some respects being HIV-positive is the opposite of CFIDS. In the first case, a person can live a productive life, though full-blown AIDS can kill. In the second, CFIDS debilitates but there are no proven cases of it killing anyone—unless you count suicides of CFIDS sufferers.

CFIDS may also bear a relation to Gulf War syndrome. Johnson quotes Gen. Ronald Blanck, the highest-ranking U.S. military spokesperson on that ailment: "I think Gulf War syndrome is CFS, but if I come right out and say that, it will seem as if we've solved the problem and we can all go home. But we *haven't* solved the problem—we still don't know what CFS is."

Ultimately, *Osler's Web* tells the story not of one particular ailment and the havoc it wreaks on the human immune system, but rather the defects of our national immune system—the CDC and the NIH—which the world looks to for leadership. When major outbreaks of an unidentified ailment hit in the mid-'80s, the public health system might reasonably have been expected to take swift action, given the disaster of AIDS. Instead, the illness was met with foot-dragging and denial.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) has suggested a congressional investigation into the matter. Anything less would not only belittle the suffering of millions of people, it would also tacitly approve of the failure of government agencies to do their jobs and so make another public appointment with regret. ◀

Sam Hussein is activism coordinator at the media watch group Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR).

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Dead again

By Chris Lehmann

To hear a growing cohort of political journalists tell it, liberal politics in America is poised for a major renaissance. And by slightly squinting one's eyes, the inviting prospect descends in a misty reverie: Clinton handily wins re-election in November; the Democrats recapture the House of Representatives; voters, weary of the rabid corporate individualism-cum-technophilia of the Gingrich revolution and the thuggish pseudo-populism of Messrs. Buchanan and Perot, rally to ... well, to what?

That, as Michael Tomasky makes abundantly clear, is the problem. While Tomasky's book, like the kindred recent titles by E.J. Dionne Jr. and Jacob Weisberg, pleads the case (on its cover anyway) for the "possible resurrection" of "progressive politics," *Left for Dead* hews consistently to the depressing tone of its title.

There are a number of reasons for this, not the least being the near-complete inability of those on the left/liberal wing of American politics to sense political opportunity even when it is bludgeoning them about the head and shoulders. Moreover, Tomasky is chiefly addressing the left, as opposed to the Democratic Leadership Council crowd or hypothetical future "progressive" constituencies, and the left in America hasn't come anywhere close to a mass electoral politics anytime in the last 80 years. And unless one suspends all disbelief and baptizes Clinton's alternately opportunistic and weepy neoliberal politics a variety of the left faith, the left won't be storming the national agenda anytime soon. But more important, Tomasky understands—in ways more detached writers like Dionne and Weisberg don't—the myriad, painful wounds that the left has inflicted upon itself, with equal parts masochism and haughty, learned helplessness. In this sense, the title of *Left for Dead* is inapt, for it suggests—as leftists are always quick to argue—that someone else is responsible for their failures, that any number of turncoats and scheming overlords have "left" them.

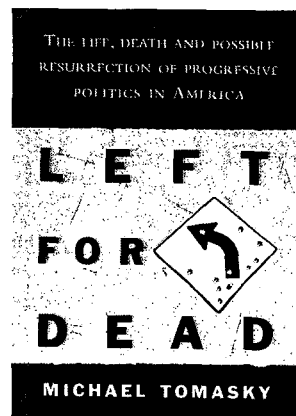
A briskly written, impassioned jeremiad, *Left for Dead* builds its analysis on Tomasky's opening critique of identity politics. Today's left, Tomasky writes, "is best described as tribal." The categories of identity that the left so casually

champions—a numbing litany of exoticized oppression, ranging from the non-English speaking to the disabled to the separatist queers—are, in Tomasky's view, "simplistic and, ultimately, dishonest. They mute the realities of life as people live it, which are much more complex; a human being, as the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut asserts, is 'more than a cultural phenomenon.'"

Mercifully, this general critique of identity politics is becoming current enough on the left that it doesn't require a protracted explication. (For another valuable study of this dismaying subject, see Todd Gitlin's recent book, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*.) But Tomasky is able to see beyond the surface absurdities of identity politics—where so many critics on the left and right alike are content to let their cases rest—into the damage it visits on the only effective hope on dispelling the delusions of identity: a shared civic culture capable of bridging the inviolate, multiple causes of oppression the left claims to be prosecuting on every front. As Tomasky notes, identity politics is not merely simplistic and divisive, it's politically immobilizing, substituting radical-private persecution complexes for civic engagement:

[N]o member of any one of the left's defined groups has any obligations to those beyond the group: you needn't seek outsiders' cooperation or hear their opinions, because they're somehow inauthentic. Not only are they inauthentic, but they're probably oppressors, particularly if they're white or male, intent on fooling you into further submission. What this means for the notion of a common culture, even a common working-class culture, is and has been disastrous. What it means for integration is disastrous.

Tomasky teases out the costs of such fantasizing by taking stock of the left's scattered, shrinking constituencies and its recent, uneasy dalliances with the Democratic Party. But the most signal contribution of *Left for Dead*, and the analytical heart of the book, is a four-chapter section in which Tomasky examines specific failures on the left to take up policy issues that matter to many Americans—welfare reform, immigration, affirmative action and health care—with any substantive program of its own. Instead, the left typically indulges in a shrill politics of reflexive, self-serving denunciation for its own sake, leaving the field wide open to those on the right and in the putative center who have carefully developed their own policy innovations and worked out how to build constituencies around



Left for Dead: The Life, Death, and Possible Resurrection of Progressive Politics in America

By Michael Tomasky
The Free Press
226 pp., \$23

them. This is the hard work of politics; it may not offer the therapeutic comforts of ideological purism and unfocused indignation, but as the last 15 years or so of scarcely interrupted right-wing rule have shown, it gets the job done.

Of course, there are cases, like welfare reform, where the left hasn't ceded the field; rather, it's deliberately set out to make things worse. The "welfare rights" movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, advocated with utter dialectical certainty and truly stunning obtuseness that clogging the welfare rolls with as many recipients as possible would hasten the onset of federal plans to redistribute wealth. Tomasky offers up this remarkable quotation from a manifesto by the movement's most prominent exponents, Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, published in *The Nation* in 1966:

Widespread campaigns to register the eligible poor for welfare aid, and to help existing recipients receive their full benefits, would produce bureaucratic disruption in welfare agencies and fiscal disruption in state governments. These disruptions would generate severe political strains, and deepen existing divisions in the big-city Democratic coalition: the remaining white middle class, the white working-class ethnic groups and the growing minority poor. To avoid a further weakening of that historic coalition, a national Democratic administration would be constrained to advance a federal solution to poverty that would override local welfare failures, local class and racial conflicts and local revenue dilemmas.

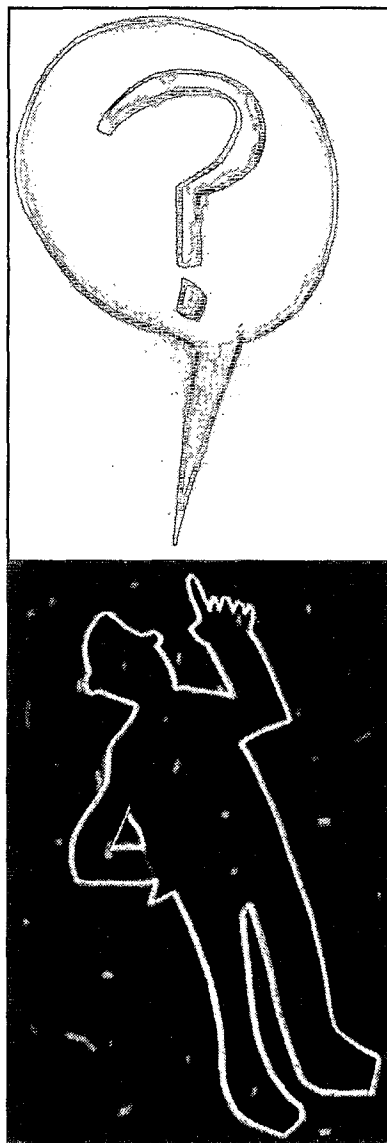
One needn't belabor the point that things haven't worked out this way. But it is worth noting that even through the clotted prose of the policy strategist, an unnerving antihumanism can be distinctly heard: There's not much reckoning with the notion, for instance, that it's rather condescending, and not altogether unracist, to blithely assume that the "growing minority poor" might not prefer jobs. Nor do Piven and Cloward register much awareness that welfare recipients would be justifiably outraged by legions of social workers jeopardizing their dignity and aspirations for the sake of a melon-headed "strategy" that, as we now see, could only accelerate the despoiling of the nation's inner cities and welfare system alike. Of course, this is not to imply that this strategy is directly responsible for such ills—but it did point many on the left who were eager to combat poverty and racism precisely in the wrong direction.

In the more recent flap over immigration, the costs of the left's chronic naysaying have proved steep indeed. Tomasky dissects the left's obstinately defensive posture in the effort to defeat California's odious Proposition 187, which denies basic services to illegal immigrants and their children. Faced with this immoral measure, leaders of the "No on 187" campaign fashioned resonant but vacuous slogans like "People are not illegal," which neatly sidestepped debate on immigration altogether. Most everyone on the left denounced the bigotry of the initiative's supporters, leaving more "responsible" arguments that illegal immigrants drove wages down and drained already pinched local government budgets entirely unanswered. And of course, as the left con-

tinued to vent its idea-free fury, Proposition 187 steadily garnered support, eventually passing with 59 percent of the vote (and enjoying the support of 40 to 50 percent of California's black and Asian voters, together with 20 to 25 percent of its Latino voters).

Mounting tensions over affirmative action have also largely struck the left dumb, and another initiative now looms in California to test whether it might summon up a persuasive argument or two. (There are early signs that the opposition may be learning from some of the failures of the

No on 187 campaign, as journalist Nina Schuyler reported in her April 1 *ITT* piece, "Golden opportunity.") Of course, left debate on affirmative action has better cause for being in disarray, since some left critics have raised serious objections to the policy, arguing that it rewards the cohort of blacks who can afford to go to college or bid for government contracts at the expense of extending more significant aid to the African-Americans who have been consigned, via decades of malignant neglect in America's inner cities, to lives bereft of meaningful opportunity or hope. Affirmative action also undeniably buys white liberals (and conservatives) an easy conscience on the cheap, when much more ambitious programs to reverse the economic deprivation of black communities are



desperately needed. Yet the policy has also succeeded in important ways—not the least being the nourishing of a broader black middle class to benefit from its provisions—and, as Tomasky notes, it would be ruinous to abandon it without anything at all to take its place.

Yet where are the left's positive defenses of the program? As Schuyler notes, the opponents of the pending California measure, the California Civil Rights Initiative, have yet to

work out a position that stresses the economic gains that affirmative action creates by making more productive economic lives possible for formerly marginalized groups. (Indeed, groups like the California Business Roundtable have formally come out in favor of the policy.) And as Tomasky observes, some liberal and moderate scholars, like William Julius Wilson and Theda Skocpol, have made the case that a class-based—or at least class-conscious—version of the policy would remedy some of its current internal imbalances while creating a cross-racial constituency that would likely ensure its political survival. They are often dismissed in left circles as pallid reformist thinkers, but at least they have a credible plan.

All the left has ever had on this issue, by contrast, are the courts, and it's always to the courts that leftists look to for deliverance. And, as Nicholas Lemann and others have observed, this strategy has spared them, yet again, the hard work of framing persuasive arguments and marshaling public support for them.

By the time Tomasky turns to health care, the reader is well-schooled in the arc of the narrative, but this time there's a twist that in many ways makes the left's failure that much more wrenching: There was an obvious policy alternative that it was hard for even the left to miss, since it was chugging away just to our north, with no shortage of glowing testimonials—Canada's single-payer national health plan. Disoriented by having a Democratic president in the White House who had campaigned largely on a promise to finally enact health reform, single-payer advocates divided on the question of whether to wait and see if Clinton's plan would afford a point of entry for them. It was an understandable quandary; but one can't help but wonder if, say, single-payer advocates had made the case earlier to the Democratic Party—or to the people, for that matter—that they might not have been in the position of waiting out the prospects that the irresolute, disorderly Clinton team would succeed with its own tepid plan, let alone be approachable on single-payer. (Yet another California initiative sought to enact a state single-payer plan, but you probably know what came of that.)

Given this long, largely unanswerable, litany of failure, where does Tomasky discern anything resembling hope for the American left? Like many other recent critics of identity politics, he argues that the left needs to reclaim the core Enlightenment faith in democracy and reason as the guiding force of public life. To those still bewitched by the blandishments of identity politics, this sounds hopelessly unhip, and definitely oppressive. But among their many other oversights, adherents of identity politics don't consider that when they decry the Enlightenment, they scuttle the left's own historical roots, and cut the philosophical ground out from under their pleas for justice. And more important, reason as a political value invites meaningful political debate: Instead of endlessly polishing and retailing tales of oppression, leftists can appeal to peoples' moral and rational capacities rather than their claims to victim status. They might even change some minds, if they work hard enough at it.

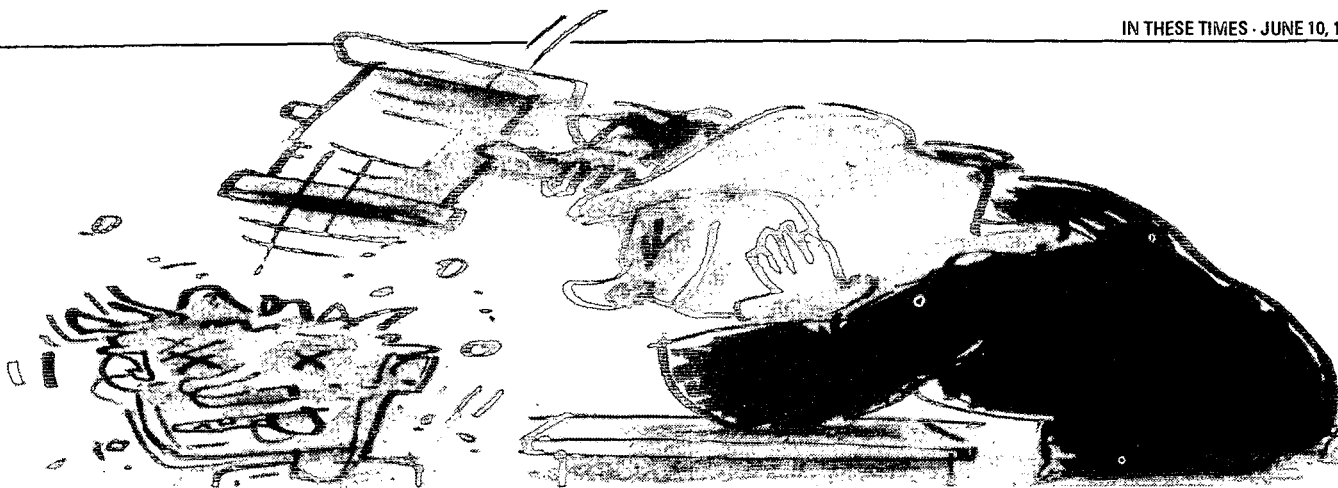
The other major component of Tomasky's hope for a renewed left is his adherence to civic culture, and he sketches some policies, like reform in bank-lending policies and making community service part of public education, that could, however indirectly, revive the flagging sense that we all share in the fates of our neighborhoods, our communities and our nation. As Tomasky concedes, his proposals are more a tentative rethinking of policies than a platform, and the reader is somewhat dismayed to find them following up a prolonged plea for the left to develop more compelling arguments. But given Tomasky's well-documented tour of catastrophes that have issued from the flight from civic culture, they are still welcome steps in the right direction.

Tomasky offers some more hardheaded policy proposals—rallying to protect workers and their families from the globalization of work and capital (a cause in which the left has so far been shown up by Pat Buchanan, to ugly effect indeed), shortening the workweek and campaign reform, among others—that all hold forth the promise of broad-based constituencies. He does, however, slip up on an important issue, offering a baffling call to “rethink gun control” in a “quasilibertarian” spirit. I'm afraid, in this case, Tomasky has not made anything like a persuasive argument. He claims that black gangs stem from poverty, for example, and that to restrict their access to guns overlooks the deeper source of their woes. It's far from clear how this follows logically, since a whole host of maladies, from crack addiction to spousal abuse, could be explained (with a good deal of accuracy) in the same terms. Do we refrain from any action on the social ills plaguing black inner cities because we hope to eradicate poverty in some distant, millennial future? This rings faintly of the duplicitous counsel that socialist men offered feminists for decade after decade—that the “woman question” would be settled after the revolution. And in the particular case of guns, this line of argument seems especially irresponsible at a time when firearms are the leading cause of death among male black teenagers, and the second leading cause of death for all American teenagers.

And as for “quasilibertarianism,” count me out. Libertarians are extreme exponents of the same baleful American individualism that has fueled identity politics, and the last time I checked, people who equate taxes with slavery were not exactly prominent advocates of civic culture. (It's true that Tomasky wants to err on the side of civil libertarianism in his own left-libertarian synthesis, but this is good cause, it seems to me, to invoke the civil libertarian “slippery slope” argument.)

Yet in a book this sharp of analysis and generous of spirit, it's not nearly as disquieting to stumble across points of disagreement as it is in more hidebound ideological tracts. Early on in the book, Tomasky says he aims to “spark a conversation” about the left's failures and its prospects. It's testimony to his success in doing so that the reader feels that it's worth engaging him in argument. Now it only remains to be seen whether the left will join in, in any productive way. Argument, after all, used to be what politics was about. ◀

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You be the judge

By Jeffrey L. Reynolds

After 24 years on the bench, New York City Family Court Judge Judy Sheindlin is, by her own admission, ready for a career change. She seems destined for martyrdom as she launches her tough-talking polemic by predicting that "writing this kind of book forecloses any chance that I might continue my work on the family court bench." Given her intense disdain for those who appear in her Manhattan courtroom—people she repeatedly refers to as "arrogant punks," "stoned-out grandmothers" and "welfare scammers"—it's probably a good thing.

Despite the alluring title, *Don't Pee on My Leg* is an anemic book, supported almost entirely by a long litany of sarcastic courtroom one-liners and a barrage of tired Gingrich-like soundbites set in large type. Simplistic slogans like "Hard time is good; Good time is a joke," and "People, not government, create opportunity" make Sheindlin sound more like a desperate political candidate than an insightful judicial veteran. You'd think that any judge would be embarrassed to see more than two decades of memoirs and 20,000 complex cases reduced to a few worn-out soundbites that could have been copied from the day's newspapers, but Sheindlin makes no apologies for the rhetoric-laden myopia that dominates her book.

To be sure, a trip into Judge Sheindlin's courtroom sounds as traumatic as a picnic with Pat Buchanan—and her self-anointed title of America's toughest family court judge seems well deserved. "If I am on my game," she writes, "a male delinquent will find his time in my court to be the second-worst experience of his life—circumcision being the first." She's unabashedly uninterested in the root causes of juvenile crime, and her throw-the-book-at-them style of jurisprudence shuns rehabilitation, opting instead for longer sentences under more punitive conditions, with parents picking up the tab for incarceration.

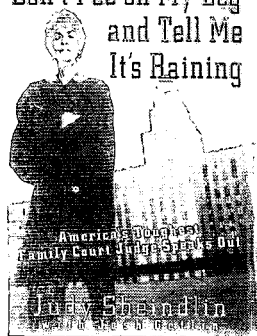
Sheindlin isn't alone in her frustration with burgeoning crime, and her proposals aren't exactly innovative. In fact, nearly all 50 states have approved measures in the

past two years that mandate or allow the transfer of juvenile cases into adult courts, where youths face stiffer sentences and are denied historic confidentiality protections such as closed courtrooms and sealed files. Florida was one of the first states to implement such sweeping changes and now sends about 7,000 juveniles into adult courts each year. As a result, some of the state's detention centers are operating at 200 percent capacity, as kids are forced into an adult prison system that most agree has done little to deter crime.

"If your killer is only fifteen, are you any less dead?" Sheindlin asks rhetorically, as she rounds out her anti-crime, anti-kid repertoire with a call for a national curfew, the elimination of legal aid attorneys for the indigent, consecutive sentences for convicted youths and an end to parole and probation—not just for kids but for everyone. There's no room for intelligent dialogue here, and Sheindlin brands those who dare disagree with her as "militant loudmouths who tell you that criminals are not responsible for what they do."

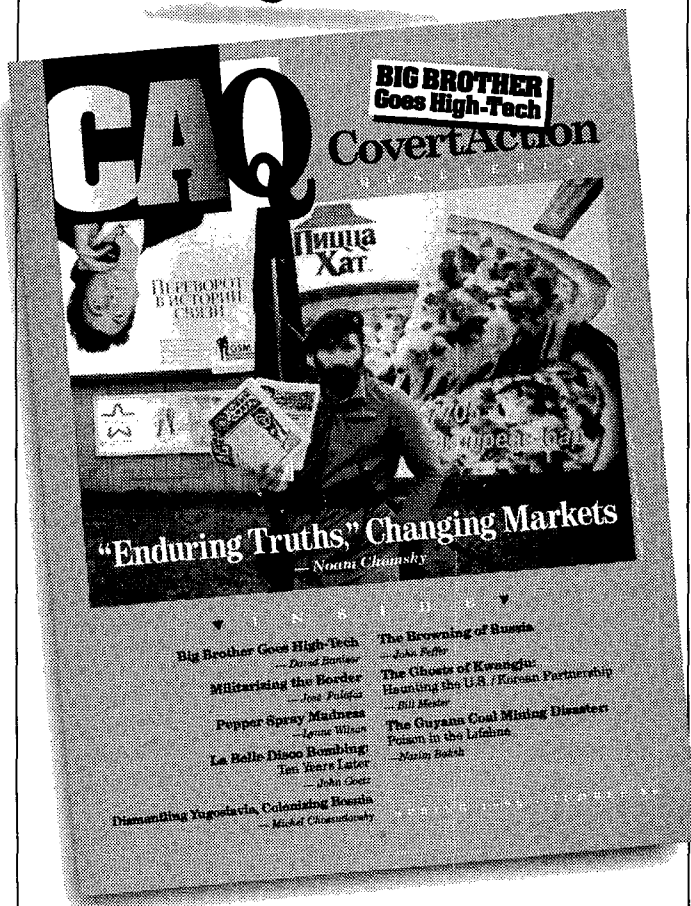
If she's tough on juvenile offenders, she's even tougher on welfare recipients. Once again, slogans prevail as she admonishes them both literally in her courtroom and figuratively in her book to "take responsibility for your life—and take your hands out of my pockets." According to Sheindlin, things like housing, welfare, special education, free medical care, free transportation, kinship foster care payments, adoption subsidies, family preservation programs and Social Security disability payments have "infantilized an entire population" and should be sharply curtailed or stopped altogether. She recommends mandatory jail sentences for welfare recipients who work off the books to make ends

Don't Pee on My Leg
and Tell Me
It's Raining



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meet and believes that nonprofit social service providers “stay up nights, conjuring up in their insomnia ever more wasteful ways to spend money.” Like her cynical elected colleagues in Washington, she’s ready to end virtually everything “as we know it,” yet offers no thoughtful or compassionate solutions to the myriad social problems that are devastating America’s families.

Far into the book, a glimmer of hope finally appears and Sheindlin seems a bit more concerned about children, when she calls custody wars “battles without winners.” With the help of some well-placed courtroom horror stories, Sheindlin makes a good case for mandatory mediation, as well as for the creation of a new presumption of joint custody and shared parenting in divorce cases, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Any illusion of sensitivity and sensibility quickly disappears, however, when she boldly asserts that more than 90 percent of child sexual abuse allegations are “mothers simply trying to punish men,” and brags about giving fathers custody when mothers persist in their “unfounded” allegations.

While such sentiments would undoubtedly prompt terror in women who count on family court judges to safeguard their kids, Sheindlin uses these brash statements to reinforce her desired image as a crusading maverick on a mission. Even her colleagues on the bench don’t escape Sheindlin’s wrath, and she spends an entire chapter assembling a “judicial hall of shame,” though she avoids naming specific judges by recounting the cases instead.

Don’t Pee on My Leg wouldn’t be complete without taking a swing at the press, and Sheindlin boosts her conservative credentials by labeling the media “the single most powerful entity in this country” and calling for more responsibility, morality and, of course, integrity. “Think of the sweeping changes we might trigger in public policy if the media presented the pariahs in our midst as harbingers of misery rather than victims of amorphous social neglect,” she writes, as she vilifies journalists who have chronicled the struggles of women on welfare.

Readers bold enough or bored enough to make it through Sheindlin’s harsh 238-page manifesto will be left wondering about the decisions she’s made on behalf of the 20,000 families in crisis she’s encountered since Mayor Ed Koch sent her to the bench in 1982. Her conservative views and judicial activity make it hard to imagine a fair trial in Judge Sheindlin’s courtroom—especially if you’re on her list of undesirables that seems to include virtually everyone. *Don’t Pee on My Leg* is a forthright, flamboyant and brutally honest book. If nothing else, Sheindlin has underscored the profound need for voters to learn more about little-known judicial candidates pushing political agendas before pulling any levers. Her solutions for better families boil down to self-discipline, individual accountability and responsible conduct. We should expect no less from our jurists. ◀

Jeffrey L. Reynolds is a freelance writer based in New York.

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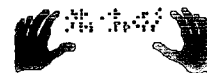
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"would not flatter Neptune for his trident"—and it expects political leaders to be candid in calling on the public to face up to its responsibilities. In 1947, when asked how to keep food prices from rising, Sen. Robert Taft answered, "We should eat less." A year later, during a presidential campaign, when Harry Truman proposed a \$40 tax credit for every taxpayer and dependent, Taft responded by asking, "Where is the money coming from?"

Deep down, Bob Dole probably feels at home with this tradition. He never held with "voodoo economics," and he may have lost the nomination in 1988 because he would not promise never to raise taxes. But a democratic politician is ultimately tied to majorities, and this year Dole the campaigner has sidled away from the "hard way" while proclaiming his devotion to it. The new Dole relies on a Teleprompter, calls attention to his own suffering and courage, has taken the "no new taxes" pledge and is even flirting with Steve Forbes' flat tax, which he denounced as a bad fantasy a couple of months ago. Worse, Dole helped lead the drive to rescind the 1993 gasoline tax, heedless of the repeal's effects on the budget, much less the environment. A major league pragmatist, Dole is adapting so evidently to what he sees as the new moral and political order that, in Washington or out, there is no escaping the gulf between the "hard way" of his theory and the easy way of his praxis.

Dole's dilemma says something about his rhetorical shortcomings. Ronald Reagan soared over such contradictions, but Dole, lacking Reagan's gifts, is also much less able to kid himself. His natural style is dark and sardonic, and when he seeks to be affecting and uplifting, he is apt to sound smarmy and eerily like Nixon, as the *New York Times* noticed in his resignation speech.

More important, Dole's compromises with contemporary America adumbrate how little Republicans can expect from the "character" issue, their major advantage over Clinton. In the first place, all the charges against the president—even the right-wing fabrications—are now old hat; even with the Little Rock verdict, voters are already persuaded or bored, and most often both. And second, Americans are a little frightened by moral character, suspecting that it will be too severe and too out of touch to understand the seamy, complex realities of American life. While other issues were obviously at stake, for more than a quarter-century presidential candidates of personal virtue have consistently fallen to able rogues: Johnson beat Goldwater, Nixon defeated both Humphrey and McGovern, Clinton overcame Bush. We admire lions, but we choose foxes; we would like our leaders to be forceful, but—all too aware of our vulnerabilities—we insist on their being clever enough to succeed without being overly demanding. Whatever that says about Americans as citizens, it suggests that Bob Dole's political soul, already at risk, will not be enough to turn the tide in 1996. ◀

Wilson Carey McWilliams is a professor of political science at Rutgers University and the author, most recently, of *The Politics of Disappointment, American Elections, 1976-94* (Chatham House).

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(\$15, \$25, \$35, sliding scale; no one turned away.)

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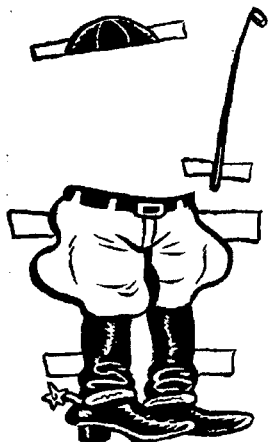
OUTSIDERWEAR

A FALL FASHION FORECAST BY WOODY IGOU

ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY LABAN

Outsiderwear—it's the bold, fresh look for summer and fall. Forget your plodding blue suits and formulaic red ties. Insider is out. Outsider is in. Outsiders are not afraid to accessorize to make their point. Poll numbers down? Spice up your speeches with ethnic or regional wardrobe accessories, targeted to each event. More than one speech in a day? It's easy—mix and match is the trend for summer and fall. Be playful, be daring—after all, you're an outsider.

IN THE END

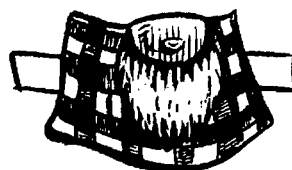
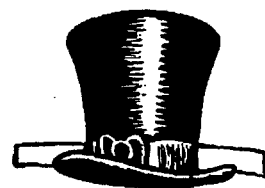


**YARMULKE/RIDING
BOOTS NO CROP**
(July 26, 1996: Lunch at Austin, Texas, dude ranch; evening address, Temple Israel, Dallas.)

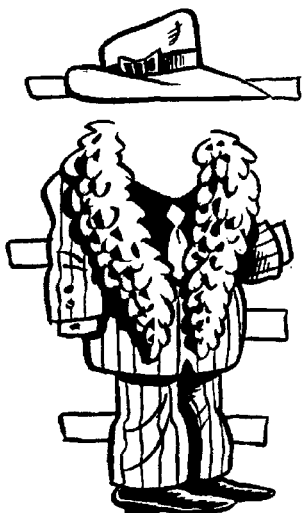
**ASTRONAUT PANTS/TIE-DYE
SNAATCH T-SHIRT**
(October 15, 1996: Crucial California swing through Lockheed Plant; aromatherapy session, Malibu.)



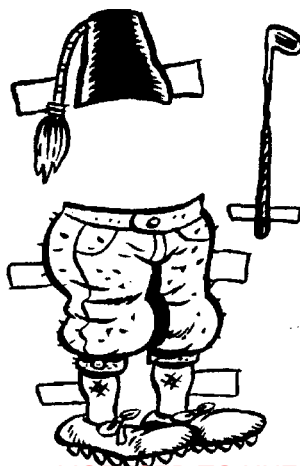
STOVEPIPE HAT/ACLT
(October 7, 1996: Noon address, Lincoln Society Ball, Springfield, Illinois; afternoon as tasting judge, Haggis cookoff, Scottish Highland Games, Akron, Ohio.)



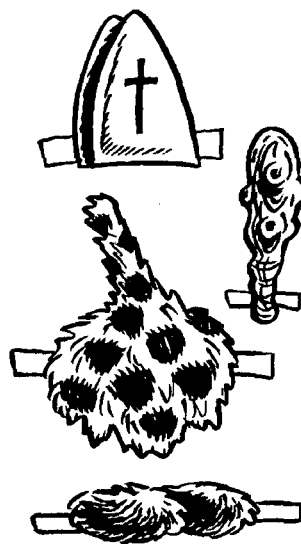
GRASS SKIRT/MOONBOY BOOTS
(July 7, 1996: Landing in Hawaii to board Dwayne Andreas' yacht to address weekend agribusiness seminar.)



**WASHER PANTS/PIPE SUIT
(FEBORVARED FEATHER BOA)**
(June 22, 1996: Speech to Chicago Commodity Exchange, followed by Chicago Bulls rally.)



KOZUREK/SAITZ
(August 30, 1996: Quick 18 at Augusta; evening speech, Turkish society, Hoboken, N.J.)



MANCARTER-SKIDNAPPE, HAT
(August 1996: Republican Convention, San Diego, acceptance speech to placate both Ralph Reed and Pat Buchanan.)